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Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 18 December 2001, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ouane	(Mali)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchinsky
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

Letter dated 30 April 2001 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/434).

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01-70152 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 30 April 2001 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2001/434)

The President *(spoke in French)*: I wish to inform members of the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Belgium, Egypt, Guinea, Morocco, Nigeria and Sierra Leone in which they request to be invited to participate in the debate on the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Mr. Fall (Guinea), Mr. Bennouna (Morocco), Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria) and Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the agreement reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

If there is no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Fall to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the agreement reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2001/434, which contains a letter dated 30 April 2001 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council and conveying the report of the Inter-Agency Mission to West Africa.

Before beginning the debate, I should like to make a few preliminary comments and to welcome all of those who are participating in this meeting.

I wish first of all to recall that the Security Council is considering today for the second time the report of the Inter-Agency Mission to West Africa, known as the Fall report. This exercise coincides with the holding in Dakar of meetings of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose twenty-fifth Summit of Heads of State and Government will be held on 20 and 21 December. This convergence gives our meeting today particular significance and scope.

Today's public debate certainly attests to the Security Council's commitment to seek - through an exercise of collective reflection open to all, based on the operational conclusions of the report - lasting solutions to the priority needs and problems of West Africa. The report contains a clear-sighted and courageous assessment of the situation and practical, relevant and — in our opinion — feasible recommendations.

Almost eight months after the issuance of that report, the time has come to take action. Today's debate, in this respect, provides a useful opportunity to respond positively to the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Mission, which are clearly based on the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to West Africa. This would constitute a message of encouragement to the leaders of ECOWAS, meeting in Dakar, and a message of hope to the peoples of West Africa.

The presidential statement that may be adopted as a result of this exercise and which would reflect the views expressed during this debate could contribute usefully to that end.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): As Council members may recall, the report of the Inter-Agency Mission to West Africa issued on 2 May 2001 underscored the fragility of the political, security, social and humanitarian situation, as well as the precarious governance and economic development conditions in West Africa, particularly in the Mano River Union countries, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and the Casamance region of Senegal.

The report recommended that the United Nations, as well as the international community, should consider the adoption of an integrated and comprehensive regional approach in the context of efforts to prevent, manage and contribute to resolving the many conflicts in the region. The report also affirmed that such an approach would enable the international community to address the multiplicity of factors that underlie those conflicts, and that a regional strategy would also enable us to take into account the cross-border problems that often cause the spillover of a conflict from one country to neighbouring ones.

The report also recommended that the Secretary-General should consider the establishment of a United Nations Office for West Africa to coordinate the development and implementation of such a regional approach and to facilitate and carry out good offices missions, on behalf of the Secretary-General, in the context of efforts to prevent conflicts at the early stages of their gestation.

The time has come — today, perhaps — to assess the evolution of the situation and also to outline the challenges that remain and that will be addressed specifically once the office has been established. I should like to focus on that exercise, touching first of all on the situation as it stands now before I turn to the challenges.

With respect to the current situation, since the report was issued the United Nations has begun the process of implementing the recommendations contained in it. In the absence of the funds necessary to transform the Inter-Agency Task Force on the West African Subregion into an integrated mission task force, in accordance with the recommendations of the Brahimi report, the Task Force has continued to meet weekly to consider the problems in the subregion and to commence the implementation of the priority recommendations elaborated by the Task Force.

In that framework, all departments and programmes represented in the Task Force conduct regular comprehensive reviews of the subregion, considering issues relating to peace and security, governance, humanitarian assistance and human rights. The Task Force has also begun considering some of the crosscutting issues in anticipation of the creation, establishment and functioning of the office of a special representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. In that regard, the Task Force has held consultations with a variety of partners, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) through its Executive Secretary and through many of its members and other international partners such as the European Union, including the special envoy of its President for the Mano River Union region. There have also been contacts with the United States Agency for International Development, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In that connection, we have made recommendations to various departments and programmes on specific issues discussed with those partners.

Members will recall that the report on West Africa made a number of recommendations, some of them specifically related to the areas of peace and security, governance, human rights and humanitarian assistance. Since the publication of the report and since the last Council briefing, we have witnessed some tangible improvement in some parts of West Africa, including the following. The peace process in Sierra Leone has continued to progress. Along the same lines, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire has organized a dialogue for national reconciliation, which was attended by all the major leaders; today we await a statement from President Gbagbo on the outcome of that national-reconciliation forum, which has now ended and whose chairman transmitted its conclusions to the President a few days ago. Moreover, the Government of Guinea decided not to force through legislative elections that would have caused an escalation of the internal political crisis that followed the controversial referendum last month on the possible renewal and extension of the term of office of the President of the Republic.

Along the same lines, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, on the basis of a recommendation contained in the West Africa report, have dispatched a mission to Guinea-Bissau and are in the process of developing an overall peace-building and development plan for Guinea-Bissau with the active involvement of the Office of the Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau.

To this rather favourable picture, we can add the fact that democratic, vigorously contested and transparent elections were held in the Gambia, which has helped further consolidate the democratic process in the subregion.

Last but not least, the humanitarian situation has greatly improved following progress in the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Despite all those improvements, the overall political situation remains volatile, and the threat of insecurity and instability in the subregion remains real in the Mano River Union area and in Guinea-Bissau. The plight of refugees and internally displaced persons, although improved, still continues to be of great concern.

Since the Council's last briefing, there has been a relative reduction of tension among the three countries of the Mano River Union — Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone — following significant progress in the ministerial dialogue among those three countries. That was the result of internal political will as well as of political pressure from outside, including from the Chairman of ECOWAS and other ECOWAS leaders, from the United Nations, from international partners and from civil society actors in the Mano River Union — including the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network, which succeeded in convincing the three Presidents of the need to instruct their ministers to begin a process of confidence-building and dialogue. Dialogue among ministers for foreign affairs, defence and the interior began in August 2001 with the aim of restoring confidence at the highest political level, considering security problems along the common borders and preparing for a summit of heads of State, which is planned for early 2002. The ministers also discussed revitalizing the institutions and mechanisms of the Mano River Union.

The Foreign Ministers of the three countries took advantage of their presence in New York to brief the Secretary-General in the margins of the general debate on the conclusions of their meetings and, most important, to request the United Nations to provide assistance in implementing their recommendations in three major areas: support for the revitalization of the Mano River Union and its secretariat; support for confidence-building measures along the common borders of the three States; and support for civil society and for groups involved in the promotion of peace in the subregion, in particular the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network, to which I have already made reference.

In the light of those developments, and as a follow-up to that meeting between the Secretary-General and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Mano River Union countries, consultations have began in the Secretariat. Members will recall that, three years ago, the Secretary-General requested the Economic Commission for Africa, headquartered in Addis Ababa, to consider bringing the three Mano River Union countries together to study their economic integration and development problems, and to see how the United Nations could make an economic contribution to reviving the Mano River Union. In spite of some initial reluctance, with some leaders even calling the existence of the Union into question, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) sent four missions into the field. We are in contact with the ECA with a view to initiating a meeting of representatives of all of the programmes, institutions and departments that are involved with the Mano River Union, to consider what kind of practical follow-up there might be to the request that was made to the Secretary-General by the three Foreign Ministers.

In this respect, I would like to pay tribute to the United Nations Development Programme for its generous contribution to the Mano River Women's Peace Network, which has enabled it to continue its activities and will make it possible for it to participate in the ECOWAS summit, which is scheduled to begin the day after tomorrow in Dakar. It will also make it possible for it to sensitize the authorities to the importance of peace in the Mano River Union as well as in the entire ECOWAS region.

Today, the future of the subregion largely depends on the capacity of the Mano River Union authorities — and on the international community, which should assist in the implementation of its decisions — for turning the commitments of the leaders into concrete action. Those decisions should usher in a new era of good relations and cooperation based on a revival of common economic activities. That is why we believe that Council members may wish to appeal to the three countries of the Mano River Union to maintain the momentum generated by their recent ministerial meeting so as to ensure the implementation of the confidence-building measures adopted. The Council could also urge the heads of State of the three countries to hold the proposed summit to restore confidence and cooperation at the highest level.

The report of 2 May 2001 focused a great deal on developments in Sierra Leone. Today, we welcome the progress being made in the peace process in Sierra

Leone, in particular the near-completion of the disarmament programme and the deployment of observers throughout the country. This has significantly improved the political and security situation, not only in Sierra Leone but in the subregion at large. It has also facilitated the work of the developmental and humanitarian and organizations, in particular as they respond to the problems of refugees and displaced persons.

However, it must be noted that the situation in Sierra Leone cannot be isolated from developments in neighbouring countries. On the one hand, progress in the Sierra Leone peace process has had a positive impact on the overall security and stability of the Mano River Union. On the other hand, the recent intensification of fighting in the north-east and north-west of Liberia poses a real problem and threatens peace, not only in Liberia but in Sierra Leone. There is now even speculation that rebels from Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy may have decided to attack Sierra Leone with the aim of prompting that country to build up its military forces and start a war with Liberia. In the absence of peace and stability in Liberia, therefore — unless the fighting is isolated and the civil war there contained — it is clear that the process of peace and stability in Sierra Leone may be threatened. This only reinforces the validity of the concept of a regional and integrated approach, which is at the heart of the report of 2 May 2001. We believe that in the face of this worsening situation, Council members should encourage President Kabbah and President Taylor to cooperate fully and join together in an effort to contain the situation, in the mutual interests of the two countries and in their own interests.

As for Guinea-Bissau, the political, economic and social situation remains fragile. Attempted coups d'état have led to instability and a number of crises within the country — disagreements between the President and the Assembly, between the President and the judiciary, between the President and officials — 60 per cent of whom he considers to be corrupt — and between the President and his own party. Recently, in the light of information regarding an attempted coup d'état, measures were taken that led to, inter alia, the replacement of the Prime Minister, a number of arrests within the military hierarchy and a worsening of the unstable political situation.

In consultation with the leaders of ECOWAS, the Secretary-General has initiated, or provided support for, various initiatives involving the President of Guinea-Bissau and the authorities of that country, and the United Nations is continuing to cooperate with ECOWAS and with the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, with a view to stabilizing the political situation in Guinea-Bissau. We believe that the opportunity for us to represent the Secretary-General in the ECOWAS summit, scheduled to take place in Dakar in two days' time, will make it possible for us to participate in various informal consultations on Guinea-Bissau.

In spite of the unstable situation, we believe that international financial assistance to Guinea-Bissau remains an urgent necessity if we are to enable that country to deal with the deep-rooted causes of the crisis, given that institutions are virtually non-existent, the army is disorganized, former combatants need to be reintegrated, and there is endemic poverty and a crippling debt burden. Even if at present the persistent instability has adversely affected the will of donors and their confidence in the Government's ability to function efficiently, we believe that it is necessary for the international donor community to continue to assist the country so as to help it meet its most pressing economic and social needs and to foster the feeling among the population that democracy can bring tangible improvements in their living conditions. In this respect, we wish to commend the World Bank for continuing its initiative to finance the reintegration of former combatants in Guinea-Bissau, as recommended by the mission in its report of 2 May. This support is crucial, as any further deterioration of the situation in Guinea-Bissau would affect not only that country but also Senegal, because of its proximity to the Casamance region of that country, where rebellion is under way.

Members of the Council will recall that in the report of 2 May, in addition to the questions regarding the Mano River Union, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and other countries, the situation of refugees was emphasized by the mission, and some of the most important recommendations related to that question. In that respect, the Mission made recommendations regarding moving refugee camps that were too close to the borders and relocating them far from those borders, separating real refugees from armed militias and ensuring access to populations requiring humanitarian assistance. It could be said that the situation has

improved significantly since then, both in Sierra Leone and Guinea.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has done excellent work in assisting, relocating and repatriating refugees and in helping displaced persons — with regard to both Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Guinea. UNHCR has also launched a mass information campaign targeting Sierra Leonean refugees in order to inform them about the repatriation options available to them. Moreover, it has adjusted upwards its repatriation and reintegration plan. It expects to be able to repatriate 500,000 displaced Sierra Leoneans in the subregion, including the 200,000 Sierra Leoneans residing as refugees in neighbouring countries, mainly in Guinea, and also in Liberia.

Nonetheless, the humanitarian situation has been affected by the latest fighting in Liberia. Several thousand refugees, mostly women and children, have been forced to flee their homes at a time when the capacity of humanitarian agencies to respond to their needs is at its lowest. Most of them have even crossed borders and now find themselves in neighbouring countries. This means that we must act very quickly to help these innocent victims, as well as to put in place processes to contain the war in Liberia and to scale it back.

Humanitarian agencies are currently assessing the needs in Liberia, and the situation will become clearer in the coming days. The Secretary-General has already alerted his representatives in both Sierra Leone and Liberia to monitor the situations closely and propose ways and means for better response by the United Nations.

I would also like to draw the attention of the members of the Security Council to the fact that many Liberian refugees are still living in Guinea and Sierra Leone and that there are also displaced Liberian nationals in Liberia itself. At this very moment the departments concerned are in the process of requesting authorization from the security services to send a mission to the Kolahun region and to northern Liberia.

At the same time, we are seeing signs of impatience towards Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees on the part of the host community in Guinea. Members of the Council could make an urgent appeal to the international donor community to respond favourably and generously to requests for humanitarian assistance for refugees and displaced persons in the countries of the Mano River region.

That is the situation today. I would now like to try to respond to the question of the challenges that must now be met.

The developments in the subregion, and particularly in the Mano River region, clearly point to the need for the Council to remain engaged. It is clear that there continue to be tensions within the countries concerned and across their national boundaries. If not contained, those tensions could jeopardize the peace and security, development and integration of the entire subregion. It is for that reason that the following questions present particular challenges.

The first question is that of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). The current impossibility of having adequate resources to support the reintegration of demobilized soldiers and armed militia groups in several countries of the subregion continues to pose a risk to the stability of the subregion, as well a risk of a resurgence of the conflict in Liberia — as recent events in Kolahun illustrate. It could also jeopardize peace in Sierra Leone.

It has been proposed that the Security Council appeal for the process of disarmament and reintegration under way in Sierra Leone to be given greater support from the international community. In fact, we must note today that a great deal remains to be done with regard to the reintegration of former combatants of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other former combatants in Sierra Leone.

Mozambique was in its time a relevant case, in which former combatants were generously reintegrated, and we can see how peace has prevailed in Mozambique since then. On the other hand, the cases of Liberia and Guinea Bissau, where the reintegration process has been blocked, show that when there is such a blockage, war can break out again at any time. And, with regard to Sierra Leone, the imminent end of disarmament, the transformation of the RUF into a political party, the upcoming electoral campaigns for the presidential and legislative elections, and the triumphs and disappointments that will follow the elections, are all factors that could, in conjunction with the blocked reintegration process and the almost non-existent hope of an economic recovery, jeopardize the current peace process in Sierra Leone and have an effect on the subregion.

The second problem posing a challenge is that of the circulation of light weapons. With regard to this problem and how it impacts the process of reintegration, the mission recommended that the United Nations consider a simultaneous DDR process in the Mano River Union subregion. But that recommendation was not heeded, at least not by the United Nations. We are pleased to note, however, that in deciding on the confidence-building measures I referred to a while ago, the three countries of the Mano River Union envisaged having common observers along the borders and allocating resources for the reintegration of some of the combatants.

As for the circulation of weapons per se, the mission recommended international action to stop the illegal circulation of small arms in the subregion. The Executive Secretary of ECOWAS informed the Task Force on the West African Subregion that, for a number of reasons, the objectives of the Moratorium on Small Arms in West Africa that had been drawn up by its members three years before had only been partially achieved. Nevertheless, he reiterated that ECOWAS member States had just renewed their commitment by once again extending the Moratorium for another three years and by asking the United Nations to continue to lend its support for its implementation.

In this regard, several initiatives have been undertaken by ECOWAS. For example, an ECOWAS office responsible for the issue of light arms was created. Likewise, a liaison officer has also been appointed in ECOWAS to act as a link with the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), which is in place in Bamako. Finally, a new director of PCASED has been appointed by the United Nations Development Programme for strengthening cooperation between PCASED and ECOWAS.

The third challenge is the problem of children in armed conflict. ECOWAS has recently established a unit on children in armed conflicts, while Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, in the framework of their common struggle against child trafficking, have reached agreements on this question. And Côte d'Ivoire, for its part, recently adopted new legislation designed to fight child trafficking and to protect children from trafficking, particularly in the framework of the cocoa industry. For this reason, continued international support for these initiatives remains critical to their success. United Nations agencies, Council members and the international community should consider implementing a special package of programmes designed to protect children in armed conflicts in West Africa, which would include, inter alia, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, education, health, social welfare and professional reintegration. The countries of the Mano River Union could be used as a test for the implementation of this package approach, before it is expanded to other countries of the subregion.

The fourth challenge is peace, justice and national reconciliation. Indeed, in many countries of the subregion, national reconciliation, justice and peace remain critical factors for sustainable peace. Certain countries like Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Nigeria deserve special mention. In Togo, for three years now, the political situation has led to an agreement — the Lomé framework agreement — for the organization of legislative elections, which we are still awaiting, and of presidential elections, over which there is also much uncertainty. As for Côte d'Ivoire, I noted earlier the recently concluded forum on national reconciliation. I am pleased to add that relations between Côte d'Ivoire and its neighbours, especially Burkina Faso and Mali, have considerably improved since the last briefing — with the discreet but constant support of the Secretary-General here in New York, and also during the OAU Summit in Lusaka. We hope that the national forum on reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire, which has just drawn to a close, will be followed, this very day, by statements by President Gbagbo to ensure social and political stability, respect for human rights and genuine national unity. In the three countries of the Mano River Union — Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea — important elections will be taking place within the next year to year and a half. The outcome of these processes can have a decisive effect on peace and security in the subregion. We hope that the latest developments in Liberia will provide an opportunity to galvanize national reconciliation. The same should apply to Sierra Leone, but we prefer to draw the Council's attention to the need to find the necessary funding for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Tribunal for conducting trials regarding flagrant human rights violations.

The fifth issue that concerns us is the humanitarian situation. I have already devoted enough time to this to be able to simply note that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has

recently launched a Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for West Africa, which seeks $160 million to confront the humanitarian situation in 2002. We hope that the Council will echo this appeal so as to elicit greater support from the international community.

As for the issue of human rights, the questions taken up in the report of 2 May continue to pose serious problems. This is why the Secretary-General has envisaged the establishment of a post of Special Adviser on Human Rights in the framework of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, to ensure that human rights issues will be an integral part of all initiatives in West Africa, and, in particular, in the area of conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution.

The last problem concerns support to the secretariats of ECOWAS and the Mano River Union. The talks that we have had with the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS have clearly indicated the needs of ECOWAS. Indeed, as regards conflict prevention, ECOWAS is calling for cooperation with the United Nations in the development of its conflict-prevention mechanisms, for its headquarters as well as its early rapid warning systems. It called for assistance for information exchange and analysis and also the establishment of a joint mission of good offices between the United Nations and ECOWAS. Lastly, ECOWAS would like assistance from the United Nations to train its troops for peacekeeping operations.

In light of all these challenges, we can now better understand the importance of the Secretary-General's decision to establish the United Nations Office for West Africa. This Office, which will be the first of its kind, will be responsible for strengthening relations with the United Nations system and coherence in its work in the subregion. It should also serve as a focal point for liaison and assist ECOWAS and the Mano River Union with a view to considering the use of good offices and the special roles that they can play in the countries of the subregion. Preparations for this Office have already been taking shape.

In fact, as I speak, a two-person mission is in Dakar to try to resolve logistical problems in the implementation of the decision to establish the Office. It is to be established as of the beginning of 2002, with an initial mandate of three years, subject to review after one year of operation. The Office will be financed, if the General Assembly agrees, from the regular budget of the Organization.

The mandate of the Office implies for the United Nations a questioning of the methods and practices applied, whose main fault is that they consider countries individually, not the subregion. This is why the Office will undoubtedly encounter some difficulties and will need the constant support of the Security Council. As noted in the terms of reference of the letter sent to the Council by the Secretary-General, the Office will develop and implement its mandate taking duly into account the specific mandates of the agencies of the United Nations as well as the peacekeeping operations in the subregion.

As noted in the report of the inter-agency mission, the Office will also serve as an interface for cooperation with partners outside Africa and West Africa. The decision of the European Union to name a special envoy of the President for the Mano River Union, and its decision to devise a regional strategy for West Africa, show clearly that the European Union reaffirms its commitment to this regional approach. We are also encouraged by the fact that the Bretton Woods institutions and the bilateral donors have shown their willingness to cooperate with the Office. The World Bank has recently developed an integrated development strategy for West Africa with the participation of the countries concerned. The Task Force on the West African Subregion recently held preliminary discussions with several other potential partners for the implementation of the mandate of the Office for West Africa.

In conclusion, I would like to say that through the West Africa initiative, the Secretary-General, the Security Council and United Nations at large have embarked on a new approach to the action of the United Nations system in Africa, in line with the global trend towards regional cooperation with regard to security, economic development and peace, both at the level of the subregions of West, Central, East and North Africa and that of the entire continent. I am pleased to point out that the initiative for West Africa is beginning precisely when the continent itself is transforming the Organization of African Unity into the African Union and has decided to undertake its action within the framework of a New Partnership for Africa's Development. Let us hope that the United Nations will be a catalyst for international cooperation and assistance for this new African renaissance.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Fall for his detailed presentation.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): I should like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fall very much for his helpful and detailed introduction. He set out very clearly the challenges facing West Africa.

The representative of Belgium will be speaking later on behalf of the European Union (EU), and I endorse what he has to say. As Mr. Fall has noted, the EU is becoming increasingly active in its support for West Africa and the region's institutions, and that support is going to continue.

I applaud your imagination, Mr. President, in choosing a regional topic as the theme for today's debate. This is the first time in recent memory that the Council has chosen to debate the issue of a particular region, and it is pertinent for a number of reasons. First, under your presidency, during which we are discussing almost all the African issues before the Council, and then that of our colleague from Mauritius, we have an important African focus in the Council for this month and next. Secondly, West Africa is a region whose problems may well be susceptible to treatment by a sharper regional focus on the part of the Council. Thirdly, we all see the value for the Council in bringing a regional dimension to our approach to a number of problems, particularly in Africa.

We are debating the specific issues related to West Africa on a number of occasions this month, and I shall not repeat our detailed views on them here. Sierra Leone, on which the United Kingdom has taken a lead in certain respects, has preoccupied the Council over the last few years. At the moment the news is better, but next year's elections are a challenge. We will have an opportunity to debate later this week the involvement of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in those elections.

In neighbouring Liberia, the situation remains dire, and the threat of further instability spilling back into Sierra Leone is still very real, as Mr. Fall has pointed out. The Council has imposed sanctions on President Taylor's regime with the aim of pressuring him into ending support for the Revolutionary United Front. These sanctions are one of the first examples of targeted sanctions imposed by the Council, and we need to implement them sensibly but rigorously. The targeted restrictions on the Liberian leadership are a vast improvement over the scattergun effect of general sanctions. The humanitarian situation in Liberia has already been made appalling enough by President Taylor's policies.

Other parts of West Africa also trouble us, not least the huge number of refugees and internally displaced persons still on the move in a number of countries. The situation in Guinea-Bissau continues to be preoccupying and the news from Côte d'Ivoire worrisome.

However, it will be a real pleasure, Mr. President, to welcome Guinea to the Council next month, and we are sure that it will make a contribution to our deliberations as constructive as that made by your delegation, Mali. In looking back on your two years on the Council, we remember particularly the Millennium Summit, under the chairmanship of President Konaré, and the sensitive picture you have given us of how the policies of the United Nations can be made to work in Africa.

The Council needs to deepen its concern about the overall regional problems of West Africa. It is a subregion where the intricate net of individual conflicts, fed by poverty and feeding poverty, has heightened the risk of West Africa becoming the world's first failed region. The situation for women and children is particularly appalling. It is vitally important, both for the people of the region and for the wider stability of Africa, that the United Nations not let this happen.

In that context, the efforts of the subregional organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), are absolutely critical. We commend the work of ECOWAS to help solve the region's problems. It is our view that the Council should cooperate more closely with subregional organizations such as ECOWAS and should give that cooperation a very practical focus. ECOWAS needs to increase its engagement in the Mano River Union countries. Confidence-building measures and contacts between the three countries of the Mano River Union, including regular summits, are vital tools for dealing with the conflicts in the subregion, as Mr. Fall has made clear. Giving ECOWAS a greater capacity to lead and organize this area should be our next task.

The issues affecting West Africa need to set in the context of Africa as a whole. In that context, the United Kingdom Government is particularly encouraged by the progress being made towards a New Partnership for

Africa's Development (NEPAD). Previous efforts to solve Africa's problems have foundered because they have been seen either as a purely donor-driven exercise or as an African exercise which attracted too little support from the international community. NEPAD aims to merge these two elements into a partnership. It must represent a commitment by the countries of Africa to tackling their problems, including governance, leadership, education, health — including AIDS — the environment and conflict prevention. But this commitment, in turn, should attract a wider commitment by the international community to supporting the efforts of the Africans with resources, expertise and political dynamism.

I am glad to report that the Group of Eight industrialized countries has already planned a detailed response to NEPAD in its Africa Action Plan. Particular attention is going to be focused on four areas: good governance, peace and security, education and health, and economic growth and private investment. Within those four areas, two cross-cutting issues have been identified: regional cooperation and integration, and agriculture and water. These core themes will be further developed by the eight personal representatives for Africa in several meetings over the next six months, leading up to the Canadian G-8 summit in June. Africa needs an integrated strategy of this kind, linking better terms on debt, trade, development assistance and conflict resolution. Such an investment will not arrive from outside without confidence in the potential for results.

So, I come to a well-worn theme: cohesion. The necessary cohesion has not yet been delivered. The Council has to respond to the problems of West Africa as a coherent whole and to interact effectively with the other relevant parts of the United Nations. The interface between conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building is nowhere more relevant than in Africa. The conflicts in Africa set it in sharp focus.

We cannot, however, allow a concentration only on conflict. The Security Council needs to work better with its colleagues in the Economic and Social Council and other parts of the system to take a more holistic look at the economic, social and political problems that create conflict and poverty. It is also important that the United Nations efforts in the field be properly integrated. Alan Doss's appointment in Sierra Leone as both Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Resident Coordinator is a good model for integrating the United Nations political efforts with its work on the economic and social side in this kind of crisis.

Finally, my delegation applauds the engagement that the Secretariat has shown in the problems of West Africa. The inter-agency mission to the subregion under Assistant Secretary-General Fall this spring was one of the most ambitious undertaken by the United Nations. Its recommendation to establish a regional office in West Africa has been welcomed by my delegation and others. We await detailed information from the Secretariat about the regional office after the current mission returns and about how it will fit into existing United Nations structures. We welcome it as a further indication of the United Nations commitment to West Africa and we wish it well.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, allow me to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fall for his comprehensive review of the question of West Africa. I also wish to thank you, Sir, for arranging today's open debate.

The Chinese delegation has always held the view that it is very important to analyse situations and to offer solutions from a regional perspective. The issue of West Africa is very complex. It touches on the various aspects of the peace process in Sierra Leone, such as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; the expansion of Government authority; and general elections. It also touches on the overall situation relating to Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia; the security and humanitarian situation in the region; and the illicit trade in arms and diamonds. A comprehensive solution to this issue will not only help to achieve lasting peace and stability in that region, but also serve as a good model for the current efforts of the Security Council to resolve conflicts in other regions.

At present, the top priority is to formulate an overall strategy for West Africa. The Chinese delegation fully agrees with the proposal made by the Secretary-General last April that the issue of West Africa be approached from the regional and overall points of view. The Chinese delegation also welcomes the recent announcement by the Secretary-General of

the future establishment of a United Nations office in West Africa, to be headed by one of his special representatives. We hope that the office will effectively coordinate the work of the various agencies and bodies of the United Nations system and other international organizations.

In this respect, we also support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union in their ongoing role. The Security Council and the United Nations should maintain close cooperation with ECOWAS and the Union and provide necessary and strong support.

It has been our consistent view that a final solution to the issue of West Africa rests with the people of that region. No one knows better than the African countries and their peoples how best to settle the conflicts in West Africa once and for all. The United Nations and the international community, while providing support and making efforts to that end, must respect the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. They must act in recognition of the specific conditions of West Africa and fully respect the wishes of the countries and peoples of the region.

Since early this year, the Security Council and the Secretariat have undertaken a number of active efforts to find a solution to the issue of West Africa and have made some progress. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the overall situation in the countries of the Mano River Union remains unstable. The illicit trade in arms and diamonds continues, while the peace process in Sierra Leone has not seen a basic change for the better. The armed conflict in Liberia has shown signs of intensifying. The humanitarian situation along the border regions of the three Mano River Union countries remains serious, while the situation in Guinea-Bissau and other West African countries is also unstable. We still have a long way to go in finding a solution to the issues of West Africa. We have no reason to relax our efforts; on the contrary, we must remain vigilant and continue to strive to maintain the momentum for peace in West Africa.

It must be noted that, like other African regions, West Africa has very real problems, such as poverty, backwardness and inadequate peacekeeping capacity. It is imperative that the international community, while promoting settlements of the conflicts in the region, pay attention to the issue of development. It should, in particular, provide capacity-building assistance to relevant countries. We call on the international community and the relevant donors to continue to provide political, economic and financial assistance to Sierra Leone and other countries of the region; support the efforts of the Organization of African Unity, ECOWAS and other organizations; and help the three Mano River Union countries to improve their relations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of China for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Mr. President, I would first like to thank you for this initiative of having an open meeting on the situation in West Africa. I think it is very important that countries that are not members of the Security Council should also have an opportunity to listen in on this debate and to speak. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Ibrahima Fall for his comprehensive presentation.

During the last year, the conflicts in West Africa have been on the agenda of the Council on several occasions. We have discussed issues relating to Liberia and Sierra Leone, the humanitarian situation in Guinea and the situation in Guinea-Bissau. It is clear to us that these conflicts are intertwined in both causes and effects.

A lasting solution and a durable peace in West Africa can, in our view, be found only by the peoples and countries of West Africa themselves. The United Nations, the humanitarian agencies and the donor community could do more to facilitate negotiations and support peace-building. But they cannot create peace if the parties to the conflict do not want peace or if they do not take stronger responsibility for implementing existing agreements and resolutions of the Security Council.

The road from conflict to development must therefore be charted by the countries of the region. If there is no strong ownership of peace and development in the region and good governance and democratic rule continue to be the exception rather than the rule, the international community will remain constrained in its support. Short-term humanitarian assistance to help the innocent victims of war will continue, but the confidence which is necessary for investing in long-term reconstruction and development will continue to be lacking.

Stronger and more accountable political leadership is necessary to lift West Africa from the morass of conflict. We welcome the leadership of President Konaré of Mali in his initiative on the small arms moratorium, in his leadership in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and in bringing the situation in West Africa as a whole before the Security Council.

Lately, there have been some positive developments. We are pleased to note that the political dialogue between the Mano River countries is continuing. The proposed summit meeting between the three heads of State can be an important step forward. We welcome the establishment of the Secretary-General's regional Office for West Africa, in Senegal. We encourage regional actors such as ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity and the Mano River Union to engage in constructive cooperation with the newly established office.

The progress already achieved in West Africa needs to be strengthened. It is important that West Africa receive continued international attention and resources.

Norway is contributing to the work for peace in West Africa, among others, through the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development in West Africa, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme in Sierra Leone and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Norway has also supported the work for the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms in West Africa and is considering extending our "Training for Peace" programme to include West Africa.

In Sierra Leone, Norway congratulates the United Nations and UNAMSIL on their continued contributions to a peaceful solution. DDR is key here to securing lasting peace. The recent improvements, particularly demobilization of former combatants and UNAMSIL deployment to previously rebel-held territory, are encouraging signs. The DDR programme is, however, severely underfinanced. If demobilized combatants are not offered economic opportunities, they may turn to activities that can undermine the peace process. For the long-term stability of the region, it is crucial that income-generating activities be created. Ex-combatants should be offered an opportunity to participate in the revitalization of the country's economy. Norway has contributed $1.5 million to the DDR fund. We encourage other members to increase their financial contributions.

Long, drawn-out civil wars in West Africa have created one of the world's most serious forced displacement situations. Humanitarian actors in general, and United Nations agencies in particular, are doing an important job in West Africa to alleviate the situation. But again, insufficient funding is a major problem. We hope and believe that the imminent establishment of the regional Office for West Africa, together with existing regional structures, will contribute to addressing this grave problem.

With the current situation improving in Sierra Leone, donors should encourage this development by contributing to the newly launched consolidated appeals for 2002. Norway has recently provided an additional $2.2 million to West Africa, primarily channelled through the United Nations system.

The security situation in the region gives cause for concern. We appeal to the Governments in the region, together with regional cooperative structures, to create a better climate for security and stability.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Norway for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Despite the significant lessening of tension recently achieved in the West African subregion, the situation there is still far from ideal and continues to be a cause of concern for the Russian Federation.

This is primarily due to the situation of refugees and displaced persons. We consider it a matter of urgency and necessity to ensure safe access for humanitarian personnel to this section of the civilian population and to continue work on establishing conditions for their return to safe areas inside their own countries. We support the work carried out in this connection by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

At the same time, we believe that a long-term solution to the humanitarian problems in West Africa can be achieved only if peace is established there. We support efforts by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to settle differences in the subregion by means of establishing good neighbourly relations, refraining from the use of force and working out agreed political steps to put an end to the activities

of armed rebel groups. We advocate that these efforts be supported by the authority and capability of the United Nations system. We welcome the establishment of the United Nations Office for West Africa, which will be playing an important role in coordinating the international community's efforts to resolve the problems of the subregion.

A key area in the efforts to stabilize the situation in West Africa remains the long-term settlement of the conflict in Sierra Leone. Overall, we are pleased with how the peace process is proceeding. We believe that the basis for further progress in this area remains the Abuja Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Provided both sides comply with it, the Agreement can help to shift the settlement process back into the Lomé Agreement track, which, we feel, still has considerable potential.

We are pleased that preparations for the elections in Sierra Leone are under way. We are convinced that in order to build a solid foundation for a life of peace in Sierra Leone, the elections must be democratic in nature and must involve all political forces in the country, including the RUF, providing its members disarm and transform the organization into a political party.

Together with all interested States, through the coordinating role of the United Nations, we are ready to continue work to successfully complete the United Nations operation in that country, restoring peace and calm to the land.

We welcome the positive moves towards normalizing the situation on Guinea's borders with Liberia and Sierra Leone. We note that ECOWAS members have been able to shift the resolution of a difficult conflict situation into the area of diplomatic efforts and peace negotiations. The leaderships of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone have demonstrated political wisdom and a willingness to solve existing disagreements through dialogue, refraining from the use of military force.

We believe that developments in this hot spot may become a useful example of how States in the continent can resolve disputes by political means, making use of the peacemaking potential and authority of the African subregional organizations.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Let me offer you, Mr. President, and through you the Council members, warm felicitations on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr.

We thank Mr. Ibrahima Fall for his detailed report. The Council should respond to his call for continued engagement. That is the only way to prevent the slide towards insecurity and instability.

Conflicts in West Africa are intricately interlinked. They are fed and fuelled by one another. Their resolution logically, therefore, requires an integrated and comprehensive strategy. Bangladesh is persuaded that a regional approach, as the report recommends, would be most appropriate. Also, the solution sought should be political. The alternative is not a viable option.

Developments in West Africa, despite persisting volatility, are headed in the right direction. The situation in Sierra Leone, in spite of many challenges, appears promising. We hope that the successful completion of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) by the end of this month and the success of the political process preceding the national elections in May 2002 will make peace irreversible in that region. Bangladesh is deeply committed to this goal.

The sanctions have achieved welcome results. The sanctions Committee's report needs to be implemented in full. Three regional countries, members of the Mano River Union, have started a process of dialogue that could lead to regional stability. We encourage the Governments of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia to pursue the dialogue diligently. In that context, we look forward to the Mano River Union's summit scheduled for early next year.

The role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in promoting regional peace has been, and remains, crucial for sustaining this positive trend. ECOWAS, chaired so ably by President Alpha Oumar Konaré of Mali, remains at the forefront of international efforts. We applaud his leadership. ECOWAS must receive adequate assistance from the United Nations and the international community. The United Nations must react positively to the support it has sought. We look forward to the forthcoming ECOWAS meeting as a source of further direction for the work the Security Council.

We are encouraged that the United Nations has persisted with a regional approach in its efforts to promote peace. The Fall report made it clear that there is no option but to pursue such an approach. Since then, the Secretary-General has created the West Africa Office. This is a praiseworthy initiative. The objectives of the Office, outlined in the report, will enable it to make a positive contribution to durable peace in West Africa. It will also enable it to avoid being seen as yet another layer of bureaucracy.

We are pleased with the Secretary-General's emphasis on human rights. Good governance remains a major challenge, as do poverty, education and the status of women. These will require a system-wide response from the United Nations and the donors.

The West Africa Office must be functional as soon as possible. Coordination will be critical to the success of its work. The three entities to liaise with one another will be ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and the United Nations Office. That Office will be required to become the nerve centre of our collective efforts. It can, and indeed should, address the twin problems of instability and insecurity. It can, and should, rekindle a lamp of hope for West Africa.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): First of all, let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important public meeting on West Africa. Allow me also to thank Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General, for his extremely comprehensive and very useful briefing on the situation in West Africa.

The unstable and precarious situation prevailing in West Africa as a result of the protracted conflicts in the region remains a matter of serious concern to my delegation. The ramifications of these conflicts, which are strictly of a political nature, have adversely affected both the economic and social lives of the entire population of the West Africa subregion. Given the interlinkages and spillover effects of the conflicts, it has become a sine qua non condition to address the issue on a regional basis.

The inter-agency mission that visited West Africa in March this year recommended in its report a regional strategy to deal with the problems and to find ways to mobilize international support and assistance for the economic and social development of the subregion. The report has confirmed beyond any doubt that conflicts in West Africa should be addressed in an integrated manner. The priority now should be to elaborate the necessary strategies to implement those recommendations in a time-bound manner.

In addressing the issues facing West Africa, the inter-agency mission to West Africa has identified weak governance as a major cause of the problems throughout the subregion. The report highlighted the need for building institutional capacity, promoting inclusive political processes and popular participation, the decentralization of the judiciary and the strengthening of the rule of law and respect for human rights. It is important that efforts be undertaken to improve governance practices in several countries in West Africa. We believe that international assistance and support are crucial to achieving this end.

It is equally important, in my delegation's view, for the international community to invest in capacity-building. Because of the protracted conflicts, many of the countries lack qualified human resources and policy tools to respond to the challenges they encounter both at national and international levels. The inability of the Governments to create jobs and opportunities for youth due to poor economic conditions and abject poverty has been a major factor in contributing to instability in many of those countries. It is therefore imperative that the international community assist these countries in restructuring their economies and in the creation of gainful employment.

Economic and developmental stagnation in several countries has resulted directly from the civil conflicts. Civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia have caused widespread destruction of their economic, physical and social infrastructures. The problem is compounded by the movement of several thousand civilians who have had to seek refuge in neighbouring Guinea, with the effect of exacerbating the already fragile economic conditions of that country. A particular characteristic of conflict, wherever it occurs, is the setting in motion of a spiral of instability affecting a whole region. West Africa is no exception to this rule.

We commend the role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in addressing the conflict situation in West Africa. We welcome the efforts of ECOWAS in the establishment of early warning centres, and we urge the international community to provide assistance for the full operation of these centres. It is our hope that the early warning system will act as a deterrent and will enable both

ECOWAS and the international community to take the necessary measures to prevent conflicts before they take on wide proportions.

ECOWAS must also be supported in the implementation of its moratorium on small arms and light weapons. The proliferation of small arms, despite the arms embargoes imposed on some countries of the region, has helped fuel conflicts by armed militia groups throughout the subregion. Technical as well as financial assistance should be made available to ECOWAS, with a view to strengthening its capacity to monitor and curb the flow of arms, especially to non-State actors in the region.

We also commend the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) for the important work it is doing in Sierra Leone. However, for lasting peace to return to the West African subregion, it is imperative that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme be completed at the earliest possible time. The reintegration of ex-combatants into civil society should feature as a priority in any peace plan. Adequate and sustained funding should be provided for job training, job creation, counselling and rehabilitation of all ex-combatants in the subregion. Unless this is done, the danger of a relapse into rebel activities cannot be excluded. It is therefore a matter of serious concern to my delegation that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone is facing a serious lack of funding. We call on the donor community to continue to assist the programme, which represents a vital step in bringing about peace and stability.

We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to establish a United Nations Office for West Africa in Dakar, which would aim at improving the reporting and policy development capacity of the United Nations as well as enhance collaboration and coordination with ECOWAS in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution and of peace-building. This is a step in the right direction — a step that will promote an integrated subregional approach to the issue of peace and security in West Africa. We encourage the United Nations Office to work together with ECOWAS, with a view to playing an active role in the field of preventive diplomacy.

The humanitarian situation resulting from conflicts in West Africa remains a cause of major concern. As calm returns to Sierra Leone, efforts should be undertaken to encourage and facilitate the return of the refugees to that country. Adequate assistance should also be provided to Sierra Leone and to Guinea for the effective reintegration and settlement of the internally displaced persons in those countries.

We commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme and other humanitarian organizations for their efforts in providing assistance to refugees and to internally displaced persons. We wish to urge the humanitarian organizations to ensure better coordination with a view to sustaining the provision of humanitarian aid, which the refugees will continue to require for some time.

Today's meeting is most opportune, as it allows the Council to reflect on the issues affecting the West African subregion. A few weeks from now the heads of State of the Mano River Union will meet at the summit level to discuss the situation in the subregion. We welcome this initiative, which should be aimed at building confidence among the leaders of the region. We believe that the Council should send a strong message of encouragement to the leaders and express its full support for their efforts to find a lasting solution to the problems of West Africa.

We also commend the work undertaken by the civil society in the region, particularly the Mano River Women's Peace Network, whose contribution to reducing tensions and building confidence has been extremely significant.

Finally, I should like to express the serious concern of my delegation at the delay in the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Despite the various appeals made by the Secretary-General, this project is still facing severe financial difficulties. The lesson that the Council should learn from this is not to rely on trust funds for this kind of project, which is far too important in the peace-building process and in ensuring respect for the basic rights of individuals. We appeal to the donor community to provide the necessary support so that the Special Court can start and complete its work as soon as possible, especially now that the country is engaged in the process of elections, which, hopefully, will lead to a more stable and representative government in the country.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): Mr. President, let me thank you, first of all, for convening this open debate

on the situation in West Africa. Your country, Mali, has over the past two years ensured that the Council's focus on the situation in West Africa has been addressed within a regional context. We now have the opportunity, weeks before the Mano River Union meets, to assess just how much tangible progress has been made in alleviating the suffering of the people of the subregion and in determining how to promote peace and development.

We must recall that, under the leadership of President Konaré, the Security Council summit in September last year pledged, in part III of resolution 1318 (2000), to promote durable and sustainable development in Africa and urged the United Nations system to develop

> "comprehensive and integrated strategies to address the root causes of conflicts, including their economic and social dimensions".

It is in this context that Jamaica welcomes the report on the follow-up to the inter-agency mission to West Africa, led by Assistant Secretary-General Ibrahima Fall, whom we thank very much for the comprehensive briefing that we received this morning. His report complements the general thrust of the Secretary-General's implementation of the recommendations of his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Today's briefing once again underscores the need for an integrated, holistic strategy involving the Governments and the peoples of the States concerned, the United Nations system and the regional and subregional organizations to help to prevent the further emergence of conflicts, restore peace and security and promote economic and social development.

The Security Council's mission to Sierra Leone and other countries in West Africa in October last year concluded that no lasting progress can be made in Sierra Leone without comprehensive action to tackle the current instability in the West African region, in particular in the Mano River Union member countries.

It also concluded that the international community as a whole must be prepared to act in urgent support, both through material assistance for regional security initiatives and by exerting pressure on those most responsible for fomenting instability for selfish advantage.

Assistant Secretary-General Fall has outlined the challenges to be addressed if sustainable peace and development are to be established in West Africa. These include the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; stemming the circulation of illegal arms; children and armed conflict; peace, justice and national reconciliation; the humanitarian situation; human rights; and support for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union.

We agree with Assistant Secretary-General Fall that action by the Security Council must take place within the wider initiative developed by African leaders and endorsed by the Organization of African Unity in July 2001. We also note that the Open-ended Working Group established by the General Assembly on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa recommended, inter alia, that ensuring greater cooperation in issues of conflict prevention and peace-building, particularly in Africa, should be a priority and focus on the consultations between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. This, my delegation believes, will complement the innovative approach taken by the Secretary-General through the inter-agency mission led by Assistant Secretary-General Fall.

The Open-ended Working Group also called for a renewed impetus to the need for concerted action on the education of children, especially girls, as well as addressing the issue of child soldiers and the reintegration of demobilized child soldiers into educational, technical and vocational training institutions and income-generating activities. It called for greater support for the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes. My delegation fully supports the Working Group's proposal for the funding of such programmes through the regular budget of peacekeeping operations as a permanent and effective solution to the shortfall in resources.

The group also called upon the international community to provide assistance to United Nations offices in Africa; to assist African countries to build capacity to integrate peace-building activities into their planning and budgetary processes; to support efforts of civil society, including women's groups, to work for peace; to seek more effective mechanisms to address the issue of the illicit trade in natural resources and

arms; and to support efforts to provide assistance in post-conflict rehabilitation, including the reconstruction of infrastructure, restoring social services, promoting good governance including support for an independent judiciary and a professional police force, strengthening human-resource and institutional capacity and the setting up of public services, and support for the promotion of good governance at the international level and of transparency in financial, monetary and trading systems.

It is in that context that my delegation welcomes the fact that the United Nations has begun implementing the recommendations of the inter-agency report. The most significant is the proposed establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, which Jamaica fully supports. The establishment of that Office will no doubt send a positive signal that the United Nations is serious about enhancing its capacity and collaboration in the subregion. The enhanced linkages in the work of the United Nations and other partners in the subregion through promoting an integrated subregional approach and facilitating coordination and information exchange will augur well for the region.

There is also considerable benefit to be gained from the establishment of a formalized mechanism of consultation among the States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union countries, other regional and subregional partners and the United Nations in order to define and harmonize national and subregional activities and to develop cohesive strategies within the region. In that regard, we welcome the communiqué issued after the 16 November meeting held here at the United Nations with the Secretary-General.

My delegation has noted the improvement in the conflict situation in Sierra Leone. We note that tangible progress has been made in the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone throughout the country, in the demobilization and disarmament process, in the release of child combatants, in the training and deployment of the Sierra Leone army and in the transformation of the Revolutionary United Front into a political party. While sustainable peace is not yet a reality, we must build on the momentum for peace; we trust that we will achieve the desired goal. As Sierra Leone enters a peace-building phase and is preparing for elections in 2002, the Security Council must define an effective exit strategy which involves measured and transitional disengagement from the country so as to prevent a recurrence of conflict.

The sustained commitment and assistance of the international community beyond the conduct of elections is therefore critical, and, as other post-conflict situations have shown, elections should not be considered as an end in themselves, but as a step towards the re-establishment of durable peace.

We also note that there have been some improvements in the relations among countries of the Mano River Union, and we welcome the continued dialogue among the leaders of those countries. That is encouraging, and every effort must be made at this juncture to ensure that the gains made so far are not reversed.

Civil society must be commended for its role in conflict prevention and peace-building in the Mano River basin. The Mano River Union Women's Peace Network has played an instrumental and constructive role in the peace process, particularly in facilitating dialogue among the leaders and in empowering local community groups to engage in peacekeeping and peacemaking activities. We applaud those efforts, and we welcome plans by various United Nations organizations to assist those groups as they further the cause of peace.

The situation in Liberia, however, remains of critical concern. The deteriorating humanitarian crisis has the potential to affect the peace process in Sierra Leone and in the region as a whole. During this year, Jamaica has pointed to the need for the international community to remain engaged with Liberia through increased humanitarian aid to that country. We urge international donors to increase funding to the consolidated appeal for West Africa in order to address the crippling humanitarian situation in the countries concerned.

The continuing humanitarian crisis in the border areas of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, involving thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees, also needs to be resolved. The flow of refugees across the borders of those three countries has fuelled one of the worst of humanitarian catastrophes. Jamaica supported, in principle, the need for an interposition force along the shared borders of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, but we regret that this is still far from

being a reality owing to the lack of requisite funding for ECOWAS to undertake that venture.

With regard to Guinea-Bissau, my delegation notes with regret that what had appeared to be a success story of the United Nations in effective peacekeeping now borders on collapse and despair. We have noted the problems related to governance and the lack of administrative structures to sustain economic growth and development, among other things. If due attention is not paid to those underlying factors, the situation in Guinea-Bissau could return to violence. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, and we believe that there need to be more post-conflict peace-building support structures, which create the conditions for reconstruction and development.

In terms of the future steps that could be taken by the Security Council and by the United Nations to enhance a regional approach, I wish to underscore some of the points that were highlighted by the Secretary-General in his implementation report on the causes of conflict in Africa.

First, the United Nations system and other partners could assist African countries in examining ways in which regional and subregional integration could be used to support economic discipline and sound economic policy and to facilitate the establishment of solid institutional and confidence-building links between neighbouring States.

The second point relates to the need to strengthen the capacity for an integrated subregional approach to conflict prevention and peace-building. Here, it is important that our conflict prevention strategies be aimed at strengthening the capacity of ECOWAS for conflict prevention, management and resolution and for ensuring security. The need to develop the early warning capacity of ECOWAS is also of importance.

Over the past two years we have been gratified to see that African issues on the Council's agenda have been discussed frequently. But on the other hand, we believe that more tangible progress must be made in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building efforts if sustained economic growth and sustainable development are to be achieved within the framework of sustainable peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Jamaica for the kind words she addressed to me.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to convey best Eid al-Fitr wishes to you, Mr. President, to the other members of your delegation and to Mr. Ibrahima Fall. I wish also to hail your initiative in organizing this public debate on the situation in West Africa. Let me also thank Mr. Fall for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

Today's debate is particularly valuable because it is taking place within two days of the Dakar summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Here, Mr. President, let me express on behalf of my Government our great appreciation of the role played in that organization by your country. We pay tribute to President Konaré, who has so energetically carried out his responsibilities as Chairman of ECOWAS. All Africans can be proud of what that organization's effective work. The Security Council should take this opportunity to acknowledge the tireless efforts of ECOWAS to restore peace and stability in West Africa, particularly in the Mano River Union subregion, and to reaffirm its commitment to maintaining and strengthening its partnership with that organization, whose contribution has been crucial in dealing with the relevant items on the Council's agenda.

During the public debate on 14 May 2001, members of the Council unanimously supported the inter-agency mission's recommendation that a comprehensive approach be taken to the problem so as to provide a lasting response to the needs and priority problems of West Africa. This approach, which we welcome, encourages us to feel optimistic. It promises increased momentum within the Security Council in support of priority attention to conflict in Africa — a priority set out in the declaration issued by the Security Council following its Summit meeting in September last year.

Almost eight months have passed since the issuance of the most recent inter-agency mission report. It would therefore be interesting to see to what extent the Security Council and other actors involved have taken specific measures to implement the regional comprehensive approach recommended by the mission, which was welcomed by all the parties concerned.

Given the constraints of this meeting and the fact that the mission made so many recommendations in so many different areas, we will not be able to go into detail in our assessment of what has been done. I shall therefore confine myself to making the following observations.

Significant progress has been made in Sierra Leone; the peace process has come a long way since spring 2000; the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has so far proved successful; State authority is gradually being extended throughout the country; the Revolutionary United Front has been cooperating as required; and there is every indication that presidential and legislative elections will be held as scheduled. At the subregional level, positive developments have taken place and dialogue among the leaders of the Mano River Union countries has been resumed. Important decisions have been taken jointly by the three countries to resolve the border problems.

This progress is a credit to all the actors involved, particularly the Security Council. However, the Council's approach has not always had the necessary regional dimension. The refugee problem in Guinea is still almost entirely unresolved, despite the commendable efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. At the subregional level, the situation of displaced persons and refugees is deteriorating day by day as a result of armed clashes in northern Liberia, a country in which the threat of a resumed civil war is very real. The Council has remained silent in the face of that complex situation. Its action with regard to Liberia has been strictly limited to the imposition of sanctions, and it has completely ignored the grave situation prevailing in the country.

This fragmented and sectoral approach may lead eventually to the collapse of what has already been achieved in Sierra Leone. We repeat what we have said in the past: the problems of the Mano River Union countries and of West Africa in general are interlinked. The future of those countries must be a common future, and lasting stability can be achieved only when their political, social, economic and security problems have been addressed comprehensively, going beyond mere symptoms to tackle the underlying causes of the existing crises.

ECOWAS remains an essential interlocutor for the Council. We welcome that fact, and encourage such interaction, which results in concrete action in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. ECOWAS, under the enlightened leadership of Mali and its President, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, has been a valuable partner and made a worthy contribution to the Security Council. We believe, however, that cooperation with that organization must be strengthened further. Its opinions must be sought on an ongoing basis. More importantly, its institutional, logistical, material and financial capacities must be strengthened so that it can discharge its serious responsibilities as effectively as is required. In this connection, we welcome the Secretary-General's decision to establish a United Nations Office in West Africa, as recommended by the inter-agency mission.

However, that initiative in itself will not be enough. The United Nations and all actors involved must seriously tackle the other recommendations made by the inter-agency mission with regard to strengthening the capacity of ECOWAS. Clearly, the United Nations will eventually have to end its activities in the subregion. We must therefore think about an exit strategy so that a strengthened ECOWAS, capable of effectively replacing the United Nations, can take over and play the lead role.

The inter-agency mission recommended that its report be submitted to ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity, the World Bank, the European Union and other major bilateral and multilateral partners so as to facilitate discussion with those actors about the implementation of the comprehensive approach recommended by the mission. We are sure that the Secretariat will follow up on that recommendation. We should note, however, that coordination of the efforts of the various actors is still lacking, thus reducing the effectiveness of individual contributions in response to the situation in West Africa. We therefore await a genuine debate among all those actors. The Security Council can play a part in this regard by making those involved more aware of the need to coordinate their efforts within the framework of a concerted, coherent and unified strategy.

Finally, I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for your initiative of submitting a draft presidential statement. My delegation is willing to work with yours on finalizing that draft statement.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Tunisia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to your presidency, Sir, for the initiative of convening this public debate on questions of peace and security in the context of West Africa. We believe that you, Mr. President, have represented that part of the world in a very worthy manner throughout your country's term of office in the Security Council. As a consequence, today we feel closer to your region, to your country and to its people.

We are also pleased that you, Sir, have decided to focus attention on the report submitted by the United Nations inter-agency mission, which visited 11 countries in the region at the beginning of this year, under the diligent coordination of the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Ibrahima Fall.

Our delegation always believed that the Council had paid insufficient attention to the recommendations contained in that report. Only consultations were held on the issue, without any reflection on the scope and significance of the concept of a regional approach to the conflicts. Consequently, during our presidency in August, we promoted a comprehensive academic debate of the subject. The summary of that discussion has been distributed as an official document, under the symbol S/2001/1174. There was broad acceptance of the idea that a regional approach should be used to complement national approaches in conflict management, and that the situation in West Africa lends itself particularly well to such an approach.

Today's exercise is therefore very useful. We are particularly grateful for the very valuable and informative briefing given by Mr. Fall. Following his introduction on progress made and prospects for the future, we are even more convinced of the validity of a regional approach to conflict in West Africa.

It is also for those reasons that we support the Secretary-General's decision of 26 November to establish a United Nations Office for West Africa whose task would be to coordinate the efforts of the Organization in consultation with regional organizations, including those in the area of conflict prevention and peace-building. We have noted that its headquarters will be in Dakar and that it will begin to function in January for an initial three-year period.

West Africa is a region whose countries share many values and aspirations, as well as many problems. The objectives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to maintain regional peace and stability are particularly similar to those of the mission of the Security Council, giving rise to various areas of convergence. The inter-agency mission made at least 20 recommendations aimed at strengthening the role of that important regional organization.

Allow me to draw the Council's attention to some of the tasks associated with peace and security in West Africa to which a regional approach would be advantageous. I shall first speak about responses to emergency situations.

The recent decade of conflict in the Mano River Union region left 200,000 dead in the Liberian war, resulted in the displacement of 70 per cent of the population of Sierra Leone and caused 500,000 refugees from those to countries to go to neighbouring Guinea. The humanitarian agencies of the United Nations are making a consolidated appeal on behalf of the 3 million people who will require assistance next year. Those agencies know that the magnitude of the emergency requires a regional approach that includes political initiatives, respect for human rights and programmes to combat poverty.

Secondly, I would like to speak about children in armed conflict. Thousands of children have been forcibly recruited for wars by rebel groups. In those wars they have been both victims and perpetrators of atrocities. The inter-agency mission made eight recommendations of a regional scope. Sierra Leone, where the United Nations has played an important role, is about to close a particularly sad chapter of child participation in armed conflict. But it is disturbing that a lack of job opportunities and of reintegration programmes for young people encourages their use by mercenary groups in the region. We wish to point out the presentation made on this subject by you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Security Council during last week's meeting of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Thirdly, I wish to speak about the proliferation of small arms. The inter-agency mission estimates that more than half of the 5 million small arms circulating

in West Africa are used in internal uprisings, armed robberies, drug trafficking and the smuggling of diamonds. The Council has recognized on a number of occasions, most recently in its presidential statement of 31 August, the important role of regional agreements in preventing and controlling the illicit trade in these weapons. It is therefore encouraging that the members of ECOWAS have extended for an additional three years the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa. In addition to international action against arms traffickers, that effort requires a special commitment on the part of the world's major producers and exporters of weapons.

The adoption of an integrated strategy for West Africa by the United Nations is needed in order to meet some of the greatest challenges to the peace, security and stability of that region. It will make it possible for the agencies of the United Nations to make a simultaneous and flexible effort that eliminates risks and is cost-effective. We believe that a regional approach requires a higher level of commitment on the part of the organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations, including the Security Council. It also requires more frequent consultation among these parties in order to maintain regional peace and security. It is therefore necessary for there to be a flexible consultation mechanism between the Council and other United Nations bodies for the above-mentioned purposes, such as the one that has already been proposed in relation to UNICEF.

It is up to the Council to lend its support to the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a United Nations Office for West Africa and to incorporate a regional approach in initiatives relating to peace and international security in that region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Colombia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): First, a quick personal note of thanks to you, Mr. President. I have just received the revised programme for the month, and I am glad that you have agreed to our suggestion to move the wrap-up session from 27 to 21 December. As we said, that is an important occasion for the members who are leaving the Council to give us their reflections before they leave, and I think 21 December will be the best date to listen to them. I thank you for that, Mr. President.

Turning to the debate we are having today, this is clearly a very important and timely debate. Many significant developments have taken place in West Africa, especially since the last open debate we held on the subject, on Monday, 14 May 2001, which I think was presided over by Ambassador Jim Cunningham. It is good to get an update on what is happening. I must say that the comprehensive briefing by Mr. Fall was more eloquent testimony than anything we can say on the significant number of developments we have to digest.

Before turning to the substantive points that were raised this morning, I just want to raise a couple of procedural points that I hope are not minor. The first, of course, is that since May we have made progress in some areas, and in some areas we have not. In fact, if I heard Ambassador Valdivieso correctly, he began his opening remarks by saying that his delegation felt that not enough consideration had been given to Mr. Fall's report. In that regard, it is sometimes useful, when we have such a debate, to actually get some kind of a piece of paper that tries to assess whether or not we have made substantive progress on the subject we have discussed.

By the way, I said exactly the same thing in May this year:

> "Perhaps, to add value each time we discuss West Africa, we should begin by asking ourselves: What have we done in the past? What decisions have we made? Which have been implemented and which not? And in the case of those that have not been implemented, why not?" (*S/PV.4319, p. 27*)

The problem we have sometimes is that, when one makes specific recommendations like this, they seem to fall into a deep hole, without any action being taken. I hope that the next time we discuss West Africa we will get some kind of progress report before we meet.

The second point I would like to make — and, frankly, I think that we, in today's meeting, may not be able to do full justice to the very comprehensive briefing given to us by Mr. Fall, as it touched on many key points — is that another procedural suggestion could be for the gist or a summary of the key points to be given to us in advance — for example, the

challenges spoken about by Mr. Fall. If those could be given to us in advance, we could weave them into our statements when we speak.

On a final procedural point, like Ambassador Jerandi of Tunisia, of course we support the suggestion of having a presidential statement issued quickly. We agree with you that it should be issued before the ECOWAS summit, and we are confident that all the views expressed here will be taken on board, including those that will be put forward by colleagues from the region who will be speaking after us.

Let me now turn to the substantive issues at hand. I would say that the most significant element we have in today's debate is that there has clearly been a change of mindset in the approach to West Africa. This is the one area where I think we are beginning to acknowledge that we have to work with the region as a whole.

This change of mindset did not come easily, of course. It began with the Security Council mission that went to the region in October 2000. In paragraph 54 (d) of the report (S/2000/992), it was noted,

> "No lasting progress can be made in Sierra Leone without comprehensive action to tackle the current instability in the West African region, in particular in the Mano River Union member countries."

This was followed up by the Secretary-General in a message (SG/SM/7665) addressed to the ECOWAS summit meeting on 15 December 2000, in which he said,

> "The United Nations is determined to help West Africa solve its problems. Together, we can make sure that the region returns to the path of peace and development to which all people aspire."

This was followed up, as we know, by the May meeting. At that meeting, all those who spoke — including Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Ms. Carolyn McAskie and Mr. Fall — also emphasized the need for an integrated approach. In fact, Mr. Fall told us even then,

> "In that regard, during our Mission we took note of concerns expressed by ECOWAS heads of State facing the need to envisage, in the overall context of an integrated approach, the peacekeeping and security operations in particular in the region of the Mano River Union, in a way that takes the interrelationships into account." (*S/PV.4319, p. 11*)

Fortunately, this was followed up by the very constructive meeting organized by the Permanent Mission of Colombia during its presidency, and I am glad that Ambassador Valdivieso referred to the International Peace Academy paper of August 31, 2001, because I was going to quote exactly the same sentence that he mentioned: "West Africa is ripe for a regional approach to conflict management." A change in the mindset has clearly taken place.

Our challenge today is to convert these words into deeds and to ensure that when we speak about an integrated approach, we do so not just in our words but in deeds. We see some challenges here. First, if you take an integrated approach, it means that if you have good news in one area and bad news in other parts of the subregion, which is what we seem to have in West Africa, then you have to show that you have taken note of this change by being able to transfer the resources to the different parts. Here, to use a medical analogy, treating West Africa as one body, if you have a left arm that is bleeding and a right arm that is fine, then it makes sense to use all your resources and bandage your left arm. But if a year later, your left arm is well and your right arm is bleeding, then you show the integrated approach by being able to move your resources from one arm to the other. This is where, frankly, our challenge lies. Within the West Africa region, we must be able to show that in our deeds, we respond to where the problems lie. I believe that Ambassador Durrant also referred to this need to be flexible.

One concrete area where we can apply this is in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Again, everyone that has made a statement today so far has referred to the need to implement DDR after the peace agreements, and everyone agrees that the key is resources. I am glad that when Ambassador Durrant spoke earlier, she mentioned that we should perhaps look to the regular peacekeeping budgets to find DDR programmes. But I note that our colleague from Norway, Ambassador Kolby, had an innovative suggestion when he said that we should look for income-generating programmes to be put in the DDR programmes.

As we talk of resources, it is clear that the region as a whole does not seem to lack the ability to generate resources. If one looks at the total amount of money that the United Nations has committed to West Africa, it is actually quite massive. I have just read, for example, from the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, which came out a month ago, on 14 November 2001, which says in paragraph 5:

> "The Advisory Committee was informed that amounts totalling $1,040.2 million have been assessed on Member States in respect of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) from its inception to 31 December 2001".

The United Nations as a whole has raised $1 billion to spend on UNAMSIL, and that is a very significant amount of money, if compared, for example, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) core funding for West Africa, which is only $70 million. It is clear that we are able to raise money if we have to. While we are able to raise money for peacekeeping budgets, we are not able to raise money for the elements of any programmes that come before or after peacekeeping.

At some point, somebody is going to ask the question, why is this so? Why are we able to raise $1 billion, which is not an insignificant sum — it is as large as the regular budget of the United Nations? For one dimension of what is happening in West Africa, why can we not apply some of it to other areas which are equally important in the region?

This applies, frankly, to the key, concrete recommendations that will come out of today's meeting. This is the establishment of the Office for West Africa. We have all seen the letter contained in document S/2001/1128 that was sent to us by the Secretary-General on 29 November, three weeks ago, where he says,

> "I have the honour to refer to my letter of 25 June 2001 to the President of the Security Council concerning my intention to establish a United Nations Office for West Africa."

That Office is scheduled to start work from January 2002 — in 13 days or so. As of now, we have no indication whether the resources will come in time for such an Office to be set up. I hope that when Mr. Fall responds to the comments made he will perhaps give us a bit more information on how the financing will come. My understanding is that it is supposed to come from the regular budget. The regular budget, however, is a tight and closed circle. There is no room for expansion in the regular budget. If you create a new programme, you have to delete a programme elsewhere. That is how the budget is maintained at its present level. So if we are to create a new office in West Africa, where will the money come from?

I know there is sometimes some discomfort in discussing issues of money in a place like, but the best way of demonstrating our commitment to some of these things is by deploying resources. If we issue the words and say we are prepared to set up an office, but do not deliver the funding for it, then, frankly, how can people listen to us? Will they listen to our words or look to see what deeds we carry out? This is where I hope that the next time around — and I know that there will be another debate on West Africa in a few months — we will have before us a set of concrete indicators we can refer to which show how much progress we make each time we discuss West Africa so that we do not end up saying the same things that we have said the last time. We can actually demonstrate that with each passing debate we have actually taken a few steps forward.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Singapore for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Cunningham (United States): I want to thank Mr. Fall for his briefing and say that we welcome this opportunity to assess the progress that has been made in following up on the report of the inter-agency mission to West Africa.

However, first, Mr. President, I wanted to commend Mali's contribution and determined effort through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and here in the Security Council to promote peace and stability in that region.

The inter-agency mission report presented an accurate and compelling picture of the political dynamics in the region and also of the regional actors, some of whom are manipulating those dynamics. As the Council reviewed its recommendations, my authorities were mindful of the need to promote a regional approach, but I also hope we are all aware that the primary burden remains with the States of the

region in the pursuit of peace. There are, to be sure, many problems that still exist — many of my colleagues have referred to them today — but I think it is also clear that there are signs of progress, and we can begin to see results of the combined efforts of the United Nations, regional groupings and national efforts to try to bring improved circumstances to this area.

The United States agreed with the report's emphasis on the need for the United Nations and the international community to promote a cross-border, regional approach to helping the States of West Africa to address social, economic and political problems. We are especially pleased at the progress in implementing a key recommendation of the report — naming a United Nations special representative for West Africa with an office in the region.

We expect that West Africa will benefit from the appointment of a United Nations special representative with a mandate to focus on regional cross-border issues, such as identifying barriers to trade and economic growth, building networks among civil society groups promoting democracy, stopping the spread of small arms and improving delivery of assistance to refugees. It is important that the special representative not duplicate the existing work of the special representatives responsible for United Nations peacekeeping efforts or the operation of United Nations democracy-building offices in the West African region, and we are reassured by what we have heard today.

It is also important that the regional representative work with existing regional and multilateral organizations in addressing the cross-border issues within his mandate. This will jump-start the representative's work and help ensure effective use of resources, and we commend the Secretariat and ECOWAS for their commitment to work together.

I would like to make some brief points about American efforts, bilaterally and working with our colleagues on the Council, to help the States of West Africa bring peace and stability to their region.

Our policy in West Africa is based on three principles: support for Governments in the region that pursue policies of non-aggression externally and good governance internally; support for action in the Security Council to deter and contain those regimes in West Africa which engage in aggression against their neighbours and oppress their own peoples; and assistance and support to strengthen regional organizations, such as ECOWAS, that aim to reduce trade barriers, combat transnational threats and resolve conflict.

The end of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Sierra Leone is scheduled for this month; the election registration process in Sierra Leone will begin in January, with elections in May; and Security Council decisions on renewing or strengthening existing sanctions on the regime of President Taylor of Liberia will be made soon. All of these are interrelated. Each requires the Council to make careful evaluations of whether its aims, as set forth in its resolutions, are being met. American attitudes will be based on the principles I have just outlined. In particular, our support for Council action to deter States engaged in aggression against their neighbours in the region will continue.

President Taylor of Liberia is violating the Council's embargo on importation of arms and the ban on exports of diamonds. He continues to provide sanctuary to armed rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), whose presence in Liberia is a threat to the peace in Sierra Leone and prospects for elections. Sanctions against President Taylor's regime are linked directly to the continuation of peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone over the coming months. While tasking the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone to keep the peace in Sierra Leone and assist with the elections, the Council must also hold accountable, and sanction, the individuals most responsible for continuing threats to the peace and the election process. I think we have seen over the past months how important this multifaceted effort is if we are actually to help the countries of the region achieve the peace and stability that they want.

We share the concern outlined by Assistant Secretary-General Fall at the recent deterioration of security in parts of Lofa County and elsewhere in Liberia, and we deeply regret the violence and loss of life. At the same time, I noted his comment about the relative lessening of tension among Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, thanks to dialogue and the efforts of ECOWAS and other outside pressure. We welcome continuing efforts in this regard and are pleased to note that there will be an ECOWAS summit in a couple of days and that there are plans for a summit of the Mano River Union countries early next year. We hope that the countries involved and all of us can continue to use

these contacts and this process to promote confidence-building and real progress on the ground.

I began by commending the authors of the inter-agency report for promoting a regional approach to cross-border issues facing West Africa. I would like to close by stressing that my Government also understands that the region needs the continued assistance of the international community, and that the United States will continue to lend its support to the region.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me.

Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to say that I intend to go through the entire list of speakers. Therefore, after members of the Council, I will give the floor to the other countries that are inscribed.

Mr. Lévitte (France) *(spoke in French)*: I would like to thank and congratulate you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate today. We are very happy that this debate is taking place under the Malian presidency. President Konaré, Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is one of the sages of Africa today. He has made tireless efforts not only to help resolve regional disputes but also to strengthen the relationship between the subregional organization ECOWAS and the United Nations. Today, this relationship is indeed a model and a reference for the other relations between our Organization and subregional organizations.

I should also like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, who once again has presented to us in a very clear way the principal elements of the subregional dynamics in West Africa. After his statement, the need to develop a coherent regional approach is even clearer.

At the end of the debate, the Ambassador of Belgium will make a statement with which France associates itself fully. Therefore, Mr. President, I shall confine myself, especially in view of what you have just said, to a few brief remarks.

First of all, the challenges facing West Africa include three that clearly have a subregional dimension. The first is the proliferation of small arms, the second is the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons, and the third is the disarming of irregular forces. By way of example, there is talk of some 40,000 Liberian combatants supposedly present in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Gambia and Guinea. It is therefore at the subregional level that these three challenges can effectively met.

In addressing these problems, West Africa knows that it can count on an organization that has been well tested and tried: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Its moratorium on small arms and light weapons is an example that is now being taken up throughout Africa and the world. Another example is its mediation in the Mano River Union crisis. Thanks to the tireless efforts of ECOWAS and President Konaré, the three heads of State will meet with one another in January. Strengthening the subregional approach requires, above all, strengthening ECOWAS.

The inter-agency mission to 11 countries in West Africa last March, which was led by Ibrahima Fall and included representatives of the Secretariat, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Food Programme — effectively played a precursory role. Our Council began to implement the mission's recommendations last month by approving the establishment of the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. The success of the Special Representative's Office will be determined by its ability to work with ECOWAS and the three Mano River Union countries.

As to ECOWAS, it would be useful for the regional office to help establish the early warning zonal observation centres and to support the Council of Elders. In the context of the small arms moratorium, it would be valuable for the office to assist in strengthening the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development.

As to the Mano River Union, the regional office must support the implementation of confidence-building measures, as decided by the three Ministers in September and October. Further confidence-building measures could be approved at the forthcoming summit of heads of State scheduled for January. At the subregional level, the Mano River Union requires special attention. The situation may be improving in Sierra Leone, where elections are scheduled for May, but the situation in Liberia remains tragic. The three countries are closely interdependent.

The recommendations contained in the Fall report have not yet been fully implemented. Further decisions must follow. We believe that one area — disarmament, demobilization and reintegration — must receive special attention. That is the key to stability throughout the subregion. Thought must also be given to how to increase the participation of West African armies in peacekeeping operations.

These are but a few of the areas that must be looked into further. Our work is far from finished and the Council will certainly have to take this matter up again in due time.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of France for his kind words to my delegation.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): First, I, too, would like to thank you, Sir, for arranging this open meeting of the Council on West Africa. It is fitting that we discuss the regional approach to West Africa during Mali's presidency of the Security Council.

I would also, on behalf of my delegation, like to pay tribute to President Konaré's chairmanship of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

My delegation is grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Fall for his very detailed briefing this morning on the follow-up to the inter-agency mission he led to West Africa in March.

Belgium, as Presidency of the European Union, will be making a statement later in this debate with which Ireland fully associates itself.

The report of the United Nations inter-agency mission to West Africa last May noted the possible domino dynamic of instability spreading from one country to another in the subregion. For this reason, it made a range of recommendations, including the establishment of a United Nations regional office. It especially noted the value of strengthening subregional cooperation in fostering national reconciliation and in strengthening institutions of civil society and economic and social development in the subregion.

Ireland warmly supports the concept of strengthening institutions of cooperation among the countries of the subregion and, flowing from that, including this goal in the approaches to be adopted by the United Nations system and other partners involved in the economic and social development of the subregion. Advancing regional cooperation is a fundamental theme in the Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and its partners in the African-Caribbean-Pacific Group of States. Regional cooperation is an approach that makes eminent economic, political and development sense; it is an idea to shape the future and Ireland warmly endorses it.

For this reason, my delegation regards the decision of the Secretary-General to establish a United Nations office for West Africa as an event of great importance not only for the subregion, but in the wider role of the United Nations in fostering peace and economic development in Africa and beyond.

The United Nations regional office will have specific tasks of liaising with and assisting, as appropriate, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union. Ireland believes that, within the United Nations system, all its institutions must play mutually reinforcing roles at all levels in addressing the challenges facing the countries of the West Africa subregion. An integrated approach by the United Nations and the international community to trade, development and other issues is more than ever necessary. The role of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, for example, in relation to poverty reduction strategies and debt alleviation can also be crucial. My delegation supports the recommendation in the inter-agency report on West Africa that the international financial institutions review the conditionalities relating to financing arrangements for countries in transition or poverty. We welcome the World Bank's integrated development strategy report for West Africa.

The inter-agency report notes the abysmal fact that poverty is pervasive in the subregion, with about 50 per cent of the population living on less than $1 a day. The Secretary-General, in his report on conflict prevention, called for development cooperation assistance to focus on decreasing structural risk factors. In our view, the primary risk factor is poverty, and development cooperation, clearly focused on poverty eradication, is the most powerful instrument that the international community has at its disposal to address the long-term root causes of conflict and to promote peace.

The countries of the Mano River Union provide the clearest illustration that regional interrelationships are not only at the heart of both the political and

humanitarian problems that afflict the subregion, but also provide the key to the solution to those same problems. The conflict among the countries of the Mano River region is characterized by many of the problems detailed in the mission report: the illegal exploitation of natural resources, such as diamonds; enormous internal displacement and critical problems of humanitarian access; the proliferation of small arms; and appalling levels of sexual abuse. It is also central that the three countries suffer from extreme poverty.

Yet, within the Mano River Union, there are signs of the other side of this coin, such as the positive role of regional civil society. The Mano River Women's Peace Network springs to mind in this regard. On small arms, ECOWAS has played a enormously positive role.

Despite the issues that continue to give rise to concern within the Mano River Union, most notably the recent upsurge of fighting in Liberia, there is no doubt that much progress has been made in the Sierra Leone peace process. This is a vindication of the two-track approach of the robust deployment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and the opening of political dialogue with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The imposition of targeted sanctions against the Government of Liberia until it convincingly breaks its links with the RUF has also played a role.

The period before the May elections in Sierra Leone will be critical, when we will wish to see the wholehearted politicization of the RUF and their complete rejection of military action to further their ends.

Again, there has also been progress arising out the meetings of the Mano River Union joint security network. My delegation looks forward, in particular, to the heads of State and Government meeting of the Mano River Union countries to be held in January.

The disarmament component of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme in Sierra Leone has been very successful, with 36,000 ex-combatants having been disarmed since May. Assistant Secretary-General Fall raised an significant concern in the May report relating to the importance of the reintegration programme. My delegation agrees with the reference by the Assistant Secretary-General this morning to the need for full support by the international community for this programme.

As a final note, I would mention that the mission report of last May stated that poor governance and human rights violations were among the main causes of conflict in the region and that a human rights dimension should be part of all activities aimed at conflict prevention, management and resolution programmes at the subregional and national levels. My delegation wholeheartedly endorses this perspective and looks forward to its mainstreaming in our shared work ahead.

Mr. President, my delegation looks forward to working with you on the draft presidential statement that your delegation is preparing.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Ireland for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Kulyk (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to join other speakers in thanking the presidency for initiating this meeting. We also thank the delegation of Columbia for offering useful complementary material for today's debate. My delegation is grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Fall for his comprehensive introduction to our discussion.

In recent years, the need for a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated strategy to meet the numerous challenges facing West Africa has been dictated by the multidimensional nature of the crises and the close interlinkage and interplay between the conflicts in the subregion. The international community has come to the conclusion that these challenges cannot be effectively addressed independently of one another and that a comprehensive approach is needed to respond to them.

We highly appreciate a number of significant initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General in this sphere in 2001, including the dispatching of the inter-agency mission to West Africa. These endeavours, in our view, represent important steps towards the creation of a consolidating force in the region for ensuring an effective implementation of the subregional, comprehensive approach to address the multifaceted problems of West Africa. Those problems are numerous, multidimensional and challenging: conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace-building, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as the implementation of sanctions, to name a few. All these areas require increased attention on the part of the Security Council and appropriate coordinated

support from the international community for regional and national efforts.

The United Nations is already doing an outstanding job in the subregion, in particular in the countries of the Mano River Union, by assisting the peace efforts in Sierra Leone through the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). Ukraine is proud to be associated with this peacekeeping operation, which thus far has successfully passed the test for United Nations peacekeeping. The United Nations is also actively working with Guinea-Bissau in assisting its post-conflict peace-building efforts. However, there are a number of challenges ahead, to which Mr. Fall referred in detail earlier.

It is an undeniable fact — and all speakers today underlined this — that an effective partnership of the Security Council with the subregional actors, in particular with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is critically important in the implementation of the regional approach to conflict management in West Africa. The international community can and must support and assist ECOWAS activities and initiatives, in particular those related to capacity-building, promoting mechanisms of early warning and conflict-prevention, peacekeeping, peace-building and others.

Ukraine strongly endorses the decision of the Secretary-General to establish the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. We hope that the activities of the office will effectively contribute to the work of the Security Council in further strengthening the partnership between the United Nations, subregional organizations and partners in the implementation of a fully integrated and comprehensive regional approach aimed at promoting durable peace and sustainable development in West Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Ukraine for his kind words addressed to me.

I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Mali.

In my introductory statement, I drew attention to the fact that today's debate coincides with the meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Dakar, and I emphasized the urgent need for measures to convert the operational conclusions of the inter-agency mission into concrete action.

At this stage, I would like to raise four points, which in the view of my delegation deserve special attention in the framework of today's debate.

First, a global, regional and integrated approach is urgently needed in the search for lasting solutions to the most pressing needs and problems of West Africa. The leaders of the West African subregion realized early that a country-by-country approach did not make it possible to understand the complexities of the many challenges West Africa faces. The Fall report was a timely confirmation of this fact, as it clearly established that the problems confronting the subregion are not only national issues but also transnational ones. The repercussions of the Sierra Leone conflict amply attest to this. It goes without saying that the effectiveness of this comprehensive and integrated strategy — which aims only to complement the national approach and to bring the United Nations closer to the realities on the ground — depends on the support that the Security Council will give it.

In this regard, we are very grateful to the Secretary-General for the establishment of the Office of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. This decision will be a useful contribution in giving the Security Council greater awareness of regional dynamics, in improving its reaction time and in promoting an effective partnership among the United Nations, ECOWAS and the other regional actors. I therefore want to assure the Secretary-General of the complete support of the authorities of the subregion in the implementation of the mandate that he has given to the office.

I also want to mention and welcome the fact that UNAIDS and the European Union have already established a regional approach to West Africa.

My second point is that the urgent need for a solution to the crisis of refugees and displaced persons in West Africa presupposes that appropriate measures must be taken. In this regard, we are of the view that it is essential to ensure safe access to persons affected by the conflicts and to promote good conditions for their return to secured areas in their countries of origin. In this context, we encourage the strengthening of the presence of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Guinea and Liberia. We also urge the international community to give the needed

support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in order to provide assistance to persons affected by conflict in the subregion.

Nonetheless, it remains a fact that a lasting solution to the crisis of refugees and displaced persons lies in the definitive settlement of the conflicts. I will not repeat here the initiatives and the actions taken by ECOWAS to resolve these conflicts. I will confine myself to emphasizing ECOWAS's commitment to giving priority on every occasion to a comprehensive political solution.

Thirdly, the objective of each of the countries of the West African subregion is to build from within and from outside a viable political and economic framework that is based on strengthening and consolidating the rule of law, promoting a real policy of education and health, and fighting poverty — in sum, good governance. This objective deserves to be supported by the international community and by the United Nations.

In this context, it is essential to strengthen local capacities for conflict prevention and to give needed assistance to ECOWAS for the implementation of its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. It is also essential to help the development efforts of the countries of the subregion and to support their processes of integration.

Fourthly, it is urgently necessary to improve the coherence of the work of the Security Council and other intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system in West Africa. It is important to take measures to develop cooperation and coordination among the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system that are capable of having a positive influence on the situation in West Africa. To this end, we could envisage the establishment of joint mechanisms to see to it that the action and the decisions of these bodies and of the Security Council complement each other and are mutually reinforcing, while fully respecting the scope of their respective mandates.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Due to the time constraints, I wish only to take up a few specific points that we deem important for the issue under consideration.

First, the mission to West Africa, headed by Mr. Ibrahima Fall, represents a qualitative move in the United Nations approach to security, political, social and humanitarian problems in the region, which transcend the boundaries of the States of the region and negatively affect the security and stability of the region.

Given this backdrop, I would like to place on record our appreciation to the Secretary-General and to Mr. Ibrahima Fall for their commendable efforts and for the valuable recommendations included in the report of the mission. We hope that these recommendations will become the basis for the international Organization's efforts, together with its specialized agencies, each within its own mandate, to provide the necessary support to all the States of West Africa, both individually and collectively, to deal with the various challenges they face in various fields.

Secondly, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) represents the largest, most comprehensive regional framework for dealing with transboundary challenges faced by the States of the region. We believe that all activities undertaken by the United Nations to assist the subregion should be conducted in close coordination and consultation with ECOWAS, and all should be aimed at dealing with the immediate and long-term needs determined by ECOWAS itself.

We are encouraged by paragraph 69 of the mission's report, reflecting the centrality of this issue, and we hope that the new United Nations Office for West Africa, which will be established on 1 January, will represent a focal point of contact through which ECOWAS priorities can be determined and various programmes can be laid down and implemented.

Thirdly, the crisis faced by Sierra Leone has always been at the forefront of the problems faced by the subregion; therefore, reaching a final and comprehensive settlement of that crisis should remain a top priority for the international community in the near future. Taking this into account, with the presidential and legislative elections next May, we hope that the Security Council will seriously consider expanding the military component of the United Nations Mission in

Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) further, to its mandated size, in accordance with resolution 1346 (2001) so as to enable the United Nations to maintain security in all parts of the country and to provide the necessary conditions for holding those elections in a free, fair and secure environment. We would like to reaffirm that the organization and the holding of these elections will not represent the end of the efforts that have been deployed. We previously witnessed a sudden deterioration of conditions in Sierra Leone, even when we had anticipated the best prospects for the peace process. Therefore, we hope that the Security Council will not consider a reduction of the size or functions of UNAMSIL. Rather, it should work to implement the agreed concept known as "No exit without strategy".

Fourthly, the international community should pay more attention to other actions to be carried out in order to lead the peace process in Sierra Leone to its desired objectives. We call on donor countries and institutions to contribute generously to the financing of a special tribunal for Sierra Leone so as to enable the implementation of its mandate as soon as possible. We also call for the redoubling of assistance for the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of former combatants, particularly since the Secretary-General made it clear in his report on Sierra Leone last September that the deficit in the Trust Fund established to finance the reintegration of former combatants in civilian life has reached the amount of $33 million.

Fifthly, efforts to improve relations and confidence-building measures among Mano River Union States are a prerequisite for the restoration of peace and security in Sierra Leone. It is also extremely important to avoid tragic humanitarian crises such as the one we witnessed on the common borders of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia at the end of last year. While we welcome ECOWAS efforts to reconcile the three States and to hold a summit meeting among their leaders, we also note that the activities deployed by the United Nations in the region should serve the same purpose. We cannot secure peace in Sierra Leone without maintaining the moratorium on weapons and diamonds vis-à-vis the Revolutionary United Front. We cannot prevent further flows of refugees to Guinean territory without putting an end to the support provided to all armed militias in the region. We cannot be certain that Liberia has complied with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1343 (2001) without establishing a specific mechanism to verify compliance.

In this regard, the delegation of Egypt believes that the most appropriate way to deal with the issue would be to reactivate efforts to establish and deploy an ECOWAS disengagement military force on the borders of the three States, or otherwise to consider the possibility of expanding the United Nations military presence in the region to include the supervision and monitoring of these States, in accordance with paragraph 87 of the report of the inter-agency mission.

Sixthly and lastly, the report of the United Nations inter-agency mission contains a number of other recommendations relating to increasing the capacity of ECOWAS and to elaborating a comprehensive development strategy for West Africa, with a view to giving momentum to the efforts to establish peace in the region and to promoting respect for human rights and good governance in the States of the region.

While we welcome the coordinated and comprehensive approach taken by the Secretariat in support of the West African region, we would like to reaffirm the need to respect the delicate balance among the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations bodies, in terms of their original mandates, their spheres of competence and their legislative mandates, in monitoring and supervising any activity carried out by the United Nations in implementation of the recommendations of the mission.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Belgium. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union - Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

First of all, let me thank you, Sir, for having convened today's debate on West Africa. We believe that a regional approach is not only useful but necessary when dealing with the situation in West

Africa, in addition to the meetings that the Council holds on specific national situations. Such a regional approach is vital if we are to respond to the challenges facing the region, which include the disarmament of irregular forces, small arms proliferation, and the return and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons.

The European Union, moreover, attaches great importance to this region. For more than 20 years the Union has been implementing a regional approach to West Africa under the Lomé Conventions, an approach which has been considerably strengthened since the signing of the Cotonou Agreement.

The need for a comprehensive, integrated approach to West Africa was one of the findings of the United Nations inter-agency mission led by Assistant Secretary-General Ibrahima Fall. The Union welcomes the fact that work is continuing in that direction and that the United Nations has decided to set up a regional office in Dakar. We hope that this plan will now rapidly take shape and that the office will become operational as soon as possible.

We are convinced that, with a skilled and dynamic Special Representative of the Secretary-General at the helm, this project will very soon bear fruit. We consider it particularly important that the office should have close and sustained working relations with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union. Indeed, a regional approach by the United Nations requires close cooperation with regional organizations.

West Africa has been ravaged by years of conflict, population displacement and economic depression. The region has suffered, and is still suffering, some of the worst atrocities and human rights violations that the contemporary world has witnessed. There have nevertheless been a number of promising recent developments, one of which is the positive role played by ECOWAS.

The United Nations has succeeded in gradually deploying in Sierra Leone. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is making steady progress, and elections are scheduled for May 2002. In comparison with the situation only a few months ago, these are encouraging and hopeful developments. However, substantial challenges remain. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) still controls parts of the territory, and there are, unfortunately, some difficulties with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the eastern part of the country.

In Liberia, the European Union continues to be concerned by the security situation and considers the resumption of fighting in the north of the country to be a very worrisome development. In Guinea, the European Union is watching the domestic situation closely, particularly the highly controversial referendum held in November 2001 and the forthcoming elections. The Secretary-General's Special Representative should, as a matter of priority, undertake efforts involving all heads of State of the Mano River Union countries in order to ensure that the dialogue launched in August can continue.

The United Nations is playing a leading role in the region. The most important United Nations peacekeeping operation is being conducted in Sierra Leone. Sanctions have been put in place against the RUF in Sierra Leone and against Liberia. The European Union fully supports those sanctions regimes and has taken the necessary steps to ensure that they are strictly applied.

On a quite different front from the application of sanctions, the European Union — as I mentioned at the beginning of my statement — provides substantial assistance to West Africa. If the Council will bear with me briefly, I should like to expand on this aspect.

The European Union's assistance strategy with respect to the region has focused mainly on the general objective of supporting the process of regional economic integration and the competitive integration of the region into the world economy. The following areas have been identified as priorities: institutional support for regional organizations; the strengthening of integration mechanisms; management of common resources; development of regional transport and communications networks; research; consolidation of the rule of law; and conflict management. These last two priorities, in particular, reinforce the efforts of the United Nations itself.

A specific dialogue with the region has been undertaken through the regional organizations, in particular ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). The Union maintains special relationships with those three bodies. Altogether, since the conclusion of the Lomé I Convention, a total of 905

million euros has been allocated to the region. These efforts are reinforced by those of the European Union presidency's Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Hans Dahlgren, whose efforts and whose periodic visits to the region enable us to follow up, reinforce and, where needed, recalibrate our activities. In carrying out his mandate, the Special Representative places special emphasis on close dialogue with the United Nations and with other regional organizations.

Mr. President, your decision to hold a briefing meeting with the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) last week, dealing in particular with the subject of children and armed conflict in the framework of regional peace and security in West Africa, was an excellent initiative. UNICEF plays a significant role in peace-building, particularly through its work in disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating children and in caring for children traumatized by war.

Sir, the European Union notes with interest your proposal for a joint mechanism, inasmuch as this would allow for greater consistency in the activities of the Security Council and of the United Nations operational agencies. There is indeed a clear need for closer cooperation between the Security Council — which often takes the initial peacemaking measures, specifically involving peacekeeping missions — and United Nations aid, reconstruction and development agencies, including the Economic and Social Council.

We unreservedly support the Security Council's regional approach to West Africa and encourage the Council to develop that approach in parallel with dealing with the specific situations that are referred to it.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Belgium for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Morocco. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Despite the lateness of the hour, Sir, I cannot deprive myself of the pleasure of telling you how pleased the Moroccan delegation is to see you presiding over the work of the Security Council for the month of December. This is surely the crowning event of a two-year membership of the Council in the course of which we have all witnessed your readiness to act and your good judgement.

We listened with interest to the statement made this morning by my friend Mr. Ibrahima Fall, who has from the outset shepherded the plan to establish the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. I am sure that he is as pleased as we are to see that plan coming to fruition.

You have kept your word to all African delegations, Mr. President, and have made December a month in which African issues have frequently been on the Council's agenda and are being given the attention they deserve.

I cannot fail to congratulate Ambassador Mignonette Patricia Durrant of Jamaica on the manner in which she guided the work of the Security Council last month.

Today, the Council's debate focuses on West Africa, a subregion to which, throughout its history, Morocco has been linked in many ways — human, economic, political and cultural — and with which we have developed a very rich network of relations. That is why the Kingdom of Morocco wished to address the Security Council in this debate: as we always have, we share the legitimate aspiration of West Africa and its peoples to a better life. We believe that the convening of this Security Council meeting under the presidency of Mali is auspicious; it will do much to impel these plans.

We take note of the report of the inter-agency mission to West Africa (S/2001/434) which visited the subregion in March this year. The report is of high quality and reflects a new United Nations approach to subregional problems in Africa. The mission made a complete and accurate diagnosis of the situation in the subregion and identified the underlying causes of the conflicts afflicting West Africa, with all their social, economic and humanitarian consequences. This grave situation can jeopardize the development prospects and the future of the peoples of the region. It requires that the international community develop a strategy encompassing all the regional factors involved and resulting in substantial material and financial support.

We are convinced that such a strategy would help avoid the exacerbation of the situation and the spread of insecurity and instability. It would also help the States concerned to implement the measures necessary

to bolster peace and stability and to improve the functioning of their institutions and their methods of governance. Historical, ethnic and economic realities require urgent measures to prevent a conflagration throughout this subregion, and especially around the countries of the Mano River Union.

During the inter-agency mission, heads of State or Government unanimously emphasized the prevention and settlement of conflicts in a regional rather than a national or State-by-State framework. They stressed the urgency of tackling the underlying causes of conflict. The preventive measures that have been proposed involve the cessation of the activities of mercenaries, of small-arms traffickers and of dealers in raw materials — materials which, as we now know, are aimed at fuelling violence and confrontation. The measures would also encourage the process of reintegration with a view to enhancing the appeal of ongoing disarmament and demobilization programmes. Experience has shown that the lack of adequate resources for such programmes has, unfortunately, contributed to the resumption of tension and of conflict. Those measures would also include efforts by the international community to promote the economic development of the countries of the region through feasible projects that take into account the need for broadened markets.

The humanitarian disasters caused by the recruitment of children for war and the image of an entire generation of young people injured and traumatized forever demand that we all do everything possible to set up monitoring mechanisms so that these horrors will never recur.

It is of the utmost importance that those responsible for serious crimes against the peace and security of mankind be held accountable before justice for their crimes — with, of course, due process. In that context, Morocco supports the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and hopes that it can promptly begin its work, with the resources it needs.

Clearly, it is ever more difficult to break the cycle of violence and underdevelopment in that part of Africa without a broad regional approach that takes into consideration all the dimensions of current problems and addresses them in a coordinated manner. And who can better deal with those problems in a coordinated manner, with the highest level of credibility and with the greatest chance of success than the United Nations — together, of course, with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

We entirely support the establishment at Dakar of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. The Kingdom of Morocco will lend the Office its active support at the appropriate time. The Office can be an observation post recording in real time the facts and developments in the area, and can be a clearing house for the various bodies of the United Nations system that will have to intervene to prevent conflict and establish the conditions for a stable West Africa for the benefit of all its peoples.

We are convinced that this experiment in the field will also be a test for the United Nations in the development of appropriate means of conflict prevention. We wish it every success so that it can be a model for further action in Africa and elsewhere.

Everyone knows that Africa is the continent that has suffered the most from upheavals on the international scene over the past decade. It is therefore high time that concrete action be undertaken so that that continent, which has become a virtual disaster area, can become an active participant in globalization and finally feel some of its positive effects.

Africa has made a substantial contribution to the universal heritage, if only through its inestimable contribution to the renewal of, for example, contemporary art, from which all of humankind benefits. At this time of dialogue among civilizations, therefore, it is up to the international community to help Africa to progress towards greater stability and prosperity by strengthening existing States and curbing separatism, so as to prevent outbreaks of violence and related terrorism.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Morocco for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Guinea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fall (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased in many ways at seeing you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council for this month of December. I would like to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. I would also like to take

this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Patricia Durrant, for the outstanding work accomplished during her presidency last month.

The delegation of Guinea is grateful to you, Mr. President, for having put the situation in West Africa on the Council's agenda today. We believe that consideration of this issue is very timely, since that part of Africa, long considered an area of peace and social harmony, has become the arena for a cycle of conflict that has affected the entire subregion. From Liberia, through Guinea-Bissau to Sierra Leone — to mention just the most serious crises — West Africa has, for more than 10 years, been prey to the consequences of many conflicts. Other conflict situations, latent or known, persist that are also a cause for concern.

These conflicts have severely tested subregional equilibrium, resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, led to major destruction of infrastructure and forced hundreds of thousands of people into exile. They have slowed the pace of socio-economic integration, which the States of the subregion had embarked upon under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

We no longer have to demonstrate that these conflicts are subregional in scope. It now appears that only a comprehensive approach can preserve peace, security and harmony in West Africa. That is why my country welcomed with great interest the Secretary-General's initiative to send an inter-agency mission to the subregion. The mission was led by Mr. Ibrahima Fall, whose presence here today I would like to welcome. The mission submitted a series of very relevant recommendations for the preservation of peace and security in West Africa. These have enabled us to identify the subregion's real needs for lasting peace. We would like to support the recommendations in the Fall report, particularly those relating to readjustment of the various mechanisms for drawing up the different strategies and policies of the United Nations system and to creation of a mechanism for systematic and regular consultations between the various agencies in the United Nations system.

We support the idea of effectively taking into account national and subregional problems in programming strategies as this will facilitate the preparation of comprehensive programmes. The preparation of coherent strategies requires greater cooperation between, on the one hand, Governments and entities within the United Nations system and, on the other, the United Nations system, ECOWAS and other subregional organizations.

In this regard, my delegation welcomes the imminent opening of the United Nations Office for West Africa. This new partnership will certainly provide another United Nations point of support, which can strengthen the Organization's cooperation with ECOWAS and the main actors working to resolve conflict and establish good governance in the subregion.

We believe that the elaboration of a comprehensive United Nations framework plan to help in developing the region, including a strategic plan of action for peace-building and recovery in our countries, is an absolute necessity. An emergency plan could be implemented to provide massive aid for reconstructing countries devastated by war and those that have suffered particularly from the consequences of conflict.

My delegation would like to stress the leading role of ECOWAS in preventing and resolving conflict in the subregion. In Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS and its intervention force, the Monitoring Group, have certainly made a considerable contribution to resolving crises. Today, the Mano River area is a source of serious concern to us.

Significant progress has been made over the past few months, however. As a result of a civil society initiative, a constructive dialogue has begun among the leaders of the three countries. The forthcoming meeting between the heads of State of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea will, we hope, enable the following objectives to be attained: first, the restoration of trust among the three Governments; secondly, the neutralization of rebel groups operating in the subregion; and, thirdly, the re-launching of the activities of the Mano River Union.

However, to back up the encouraging results in the Mano River area, my delegation would like the Council to continue to monitor the situation carefully. In this context, the Council should give special attention to the recommendations contained in the report of the Panel of Experts on Liberia, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1343 (2001).

Furthermore, my country is following very closely the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Sierra

Leone. While welcoming the encouraging progress made in this area, my delegation would like to encourage the international community to provide full support for this process. Peace-building does, indeed, depend on that.

As you are aware, Mr. President, the absence of a genuine policy of national reconciliation and the failure of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Liberia, with the consequent proliferation and uncontrolled circulation of weapons, have resulted in new fighting, including in Sierra Leone and, recently, along the border of the countries of the Mano River Union. Finally, my country encourages the involvement of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone in organizing the forthcoming elections there with a view to enabling that country to finally re-establish lasting peace.

In conclusion, my delegation would like once against to reiterate the willingness of the Government of Guinea to provide full support for the various initiatives aimed at transforming West Africa into a zone of peace, security and cooperation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Guinea for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): My delegation is particularly delighted to see you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council for the month of December. We have implicit confidence in your ability and competence to successfully guide the work of the Council during the course of this month. Nigeria welcomes the debate being held by the Security Council on West Africa under your presidency. This is most apt since your country, Mali, as the Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has continued to work assiduously for the peace and security of the subregion. Nigeria seizes this opportunity to express its appreciation to your President, Alpha Oumar Konaré, for the effective leadership he has continued to provide for our subregion.

The West African subregion poses enormous challenges, both in its uniqueness and the complexity of its demography; it is home to people belonging to over 1,000 diverse groups with differing ethnicity and religions. The region is also unique in terms of its rich historical and cultural diversity. Added to that is the fact that it is endowed with some of the world's best flora and fauna, as well as with mineral and human resources.

It is regrettable that, despite those rich endowments, the subregion has not been able to achieve the economic growth necessary to attain sustainable development. Rather, we have witnessed ethnic conflicts and civil wars in many parts of the subregion, which have added to the impoverishment of many peoples, particularly in Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and the Casamance region of Senegal.

The report of the inter-agency mission that visited 11 West African countries from 6 to 27 March 2001 (S/2001/434) succinctly captured the security, humanitarian, economic and social development problems facing the West African subregion. The report identified problems of peace and security, governance, national reconciliation, promotion of political dialogue, human rights, humanitarian issues and subregional integration and cooperation. Additionally, the mission's report discussed the issues of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty alleviation, the threat posed by external debt, illegal arms trafficking and its linkages to conflict diamonds, and the problem of child soldiers.

Country-specific issues such as the introduction of sharia law in northern Nigeria, the socio-economic upheavals in the delta areas of Nigeria, the conflict in the Casamance region of Senegal, the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire and the problems in Guinea-Bissau and the Mano River Union countries were also discussed in the report.

Nigeria wishes to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his initiative in dispatching the inter-agency mission to West Africa. We also wish to put on record our appreciation of the comprehensive work accomplished by the mission under the chairmanship of Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the Department of Political Affairs.

The report stated that the West African subregional economic growth rate has lagged behind, with little indication that the situation will improve in the near future. Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone were identified as being among the 10

countries at the bottom of the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index. Also, the report went further to identify the problems of high rates of youth unemployment, persistent economic stagnation and weak institutional capacity as major causes of political instability in West Africa. It reiterated that many years of civil war and political instability have resulted in widespread destruction of social, economic and physical infrastructures. In addition, the subregion is faced with the problem of capital flight and the emigration of its skilled human resources. There is also the problem of the illegal exploitation and exportation of its natural resources.

This truly describes the gravity of the challenges facing the emerging democracies in West Africa today. Despite such major difficulties, ECOWAS countries have shown great resilience and determination to confront some of these challenges. These countries have organized and put in place conflict resolution initiatives as well as economic policies and programmes geared towards alleviating the deteriorating economic conditions confronting them.

ECOWAS established its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as a military force to monitor the conflict in Liberia and, subsequently, enforce peace. This force later went to Sierra Leone for a similar purpose, long before peace was established and United Nations peacekeepers arrived. Moreover, both ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union have provided a framework for socio-economic development of the subregion though regional integration. However, there is a limit to the effectiveness of the existing subregional mechanisms developed to address the problems of security, socio-economic development and provision of humanitarian relief to refugees and internally displaced persons. It therefore follows that the subregion still needs assistance through bilateral and multilateral programmes.

While commending the efforts of United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank and the United States Agency for International Development and others to help West African countries, it is pertinent to emphasize that there is still a lot to be done by international financial institutions to assist our region through debt forgiveness or cancellation, so that resources now being used to service huge debts can be utilized for the development of the subregion. There is no doubt that the political instability currently experienced in parts of Africa is a result of the parlous state of the economies of these countries. We therefore urge members of the Council to consider making economic assistance to countries emerging from conflict — assistance to rebuild their shattered economies and infrastructures — a vital provision of the peacekeeping mandates the Council issues.

The international community also has important roles to play in this regard. We urge the international community, and developed countries in particular, to assist with the repatriation of our countries' assets that have been illegally transferred by corrupt African leaders to overseas banks and interests. It is our view that the return of such assets will assist African countries in rebuilding their economies and achieving sustainable development.

My delegation wishes to commend the recent decision to establish a United Nations Office for West Africa. We remain confident that the Office will help in facilitating the implementation of the various recommendations of the inter-agency mission.

I would not conclude this statement without referring to the plight of children and women caught up in armed conflict in the West African subregion. Although the use of child soldiers and the abuse of the female child by combatants have already been condemned several times by the Security Council, it is our strong belief that there is a need to establish sound and effective systems to guarantee the application and implementation of the rules of law and justice to prevent such gross human rights abuses.

We call on the Security Council to continue to examine and monitor closely the role of non-State actors in the conflict areas of Africa, as their unscrupulous business practices often exacerbate those conflicts. These private entities must be held accountable for all the illicit activities they perpetrate. At the same time, we commend the efforts of the Security Council to regulate the exploitation and exportation of natural resources such as diamonds in certain countries. It is our belief that, with these measures in place, the propensity of warlords to fuel wars with the illegitimate gains derived from such sources will diminish, and their nefarious activities will be effectively controlled if not entirely cut off.

Finally, my delegation wishes to emphasize that for enduring peace and stability to thrive in the West

African subregion, there is no alternative to good governance, transparency and accountability under a democratic dispensation. It is against this background that we call on the Council to do all in its power to promote and protect the emerging democratic governments in the subregion so that peace, progress and socio-economic development can be achieved.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Nigeria for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Sierra Leone. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamara (Sierra Leone): We are delighted to see you, Mr. President, directing the proceedings of the Council on issues relating to our West African subregion. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to you and your delegation for your outstanding contribution to the work of the Council during your term in this body. At the same time, please allow me to extend our thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Durrant of Jamaica, our sister Commonwealth State, not only for presiding over the Council's deliberations during the month of November, but also for her distinctive contribution during the past two years in the Council. In my delegation's view, throughout Jamaica's term, Ambassador Durrant should be credited with, among other things, accentuating the human aspects of the Council's effort to maintain international peace and security.

It is seven months since the Security Council discussed the report of the inter-agency mission to West Africa, led by Assistant Secretary-General Ibrahima Fall. We share his conclusion that we desperately need an integrated regional approach to the current crisis in the West African subregion.

A lot has happened since the report was published. For instance, in Sierra Leone today, the prospects for peace and security have never been brighter. The disarmament and demobilization of ex-combatants is almost complete, and the process of reintegration is gradually taking shape. The Secretary-General observes in his latest report on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), document S/2001/1195 of 13 December, that a secure environment with increased freedom of movement, gradual return of refugees and a resurgence of economic activity is emerging. The Government, with the support of its newly restructured military and UNAMSIL, has done an extraordinary job in establishing authority in the entire country. The decision of the Government to announce the dates for presidential and parliamentary elections next May is a clear indication of the progress that we have achieved in the peace process. We need the continued support and encouragement of the international community to at least maintain the current momentum.

Over the past several months, we have also witnessed important developments within the Mano River Union. The meetings of the Joint Security Committee of the Mano River Union countries, as well as those of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, have facilitated efforts to rebuild confidence and strengthen the determination of the three countries to restore peace and stability.

Sierra Leone believes that conciliation and tolerance among the leadership of the Mano River Union countries constitute one of the most effective means of achieving peace and stability in the three countries, which should contribute immensely to peace in the subregion as a whole. This is why my head of State, President Kabbah, is actively pursuing efforts initiated a few months ago for a Mano River Union summit meeting early next year. Meanwhile, we hope that nothing will be done in the form of words or threats of action to increase tension across the borders of our respective countries. The relative calm must be maintained by all means. We cannot afford to either diminish or erase the progress that we have achieved so far.

Peace in Sierra Leone is peace not only for Sierra Leoneans, but also for Liberians, Guineans and other West Africans.

Let me turn briefly to the recommendations of the report of the inter-agency mission. The problems and priority needs of the West African subregion have been identified. We know the nature and complexity of these problems. We also know the interrelationships between them. What we need is a new strategy of implementation — a strategy that will focus on concrete measures involving the participation and contribution of the various national, regional and international components of human development. The principle of partnership must be translated into reality.

My delegation would like to stress that most of the recommendations of the inter-agency mission could

be implemented speedily and effectively, because we already have the relevant mechanisms and institutions within the subregion to effect such implementation. They already exist. We should use them to their full potential. The two main areas are economic cooperation and integration, and conflict prevention and management. We have the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its various institutions for improving the lives and livelihood of the peoples of the subregion, as well as the Mano River Union. We therefore strongly endorse the recommendation that the United Nations system and the international community strengthen the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. The idea of enhancing cooperation with the United Nations system to develop an ECOWAS early warning system should be pursued as a matter of priority. In this connection, we welcome the establishment of the new United Nations Office for West Africa in Dakar.

Since the roots of conflict, insecurity and political instability are embedded in economic and social inequities, we also endorse the recommendation of the inter-agency mission that the United Nations agencies should make a concerted effort to assist our Governments in focusing on area-development programmes covering basic social services, such as health, nutrition, water and sanitation. In short, what we are emphasizing is that we cannot speak about peace and security in West Africa unless there is a drastic reduction of the level of poverty in our respective countries.

Let me conclude with one particular area of concern that some speakers have already alluded to, especially the Nigerian representative, relating not only to the situation in Sierra Leone, but also to those countries of the subregion that are emerging from armed conflict. This is the reintegration of ex-combatants, especially the youth, into society. Our countries could revert to cycles of conflict unless we urgently confront this particular challenge: the status and condition of youth, former combatants as well as non-combatants, in our subregion. Serious consideration should be given to the recommendation of the inter-agency mission that socio-economic programmes geared towards alleviating youth unemployment be implemented. We would also like to stress the urgent need to address the problem of education and training for this special population group. To a large extent, the future of peace and stability in our subregion lies in their hands.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for his kind words addressed to me. I invite him to resume the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ibrahima Fall so that he can respond to the comments that have been made and the questions that have been addressed to him.

Mr. Fall *(spoke in French)*: At this late hour, I shall try to confine myself to certain of the comments that have been made. I ask the indulgence of Council members in advance.

With regard to substantive matters, the question was asked whether the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa would be financed from the regular budget of the United Nations or, implicitly, on the basis of voluntary contributions. I would like to respond that in the current state of affairs it is on the basis of the regular budget of the Organization. The draft budget has already come before the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and the Secretariat hopes that the General Assembly, through its Fifth Committee, will give its consent to the financing of the Office.

Another financing question was raised with regard to the problem of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and peace-building. I can only reiterate the recommendations of the inter-agency mission, and the observations made throughout this debate, concerning the importance of strengthening significantly the financial aspect of reintegration in DDR.

Finally, a last financing problem concerns the Tribunal and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone. The Council will recall that, for good reasons, it was decided to finance both the Tribunal in Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission through voluntary contributions. Today, one must acknowledge that the funds are insufficient to permit the launching of those two institutions. However, the Secretariat is sending a mission to the area in January to contact authorities with a view to the imminent establishment of the Tribunal, inter alia.

In a second question, it was suggested that for a future debate on West Africa, a report be prepared by

the Secretariat indicating the application of the recommendations and evaluating the actions initiated. The Secretariat has noted this recommendation and will do its utmost to prepare an interim report.

Thirdly, it was suggested that natural resources and development issues be integrated with peace and security issued. The Council will remember that the report of the inter-agency mission had been moving in that direction, and that is why the Council decided that the reports should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council as well. The Security Council had envisaged a joint meeting between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. I believe that initiative is still on the table, and one hopes that within the context of the mechanism that you have considered putting into place, Mr. President, it might be possible for West Africa to test this kind of inter-agency coordination within the United Nations system.

In addition, a proposal was made that the partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should be the guiding factor of the work of the Office. I can confirm that this is the approach that has been followed since the beginning, because — apart from the fact that ECOWAS was a member of the inter-agency mission in West Africa — the report of the mission has shown that the action of the future United Nations Office in West Africa will involve a partnership with ECOWAS. The partnership will serve as a kind of matrix to measure the success of the Office, particularly with a view to strengthening the capacities of the ECOWAS secretariat.

The penultimate question concerns the interaction between the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. I believe that I have already referred to that.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity, following the members of the Security Council and on behalf of the Secretary-General, to pay tribute to President Alpha Oumar Konaré's chairmanship of ECOWAS. On behalf of the Secretary-General, I can bear witness to the fact that he has made partnership with the United Nations a day-to-day reality. We appreciate his vision and initiatives, but especially his dynamism, availability and sense of efficiency and collaboration and, above all, the important successes he has achieved at the head of ECOWAS in the peace process, with regard to the movement of weapons and in strengthening economic integration in West Africa. It is on that note, on behalf of the Secretary-General, that I would like to conclude my statement.

The President: I thank Mr. Fall for his clarifications and responses, as well as for his kind words addressed to President Konaré.

There are no other speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has therefore concluded this stage of consideration of the item on its agenda.

Before adjourning the meeting, I wish to thank all of the participants in this debate for their important contributions. The views expressed during this debate will be reflected in the presidential statement that will confirm the Security Council meeting this morning.

In addition, I should like to draw the attention of Council members to the following points. First, the meeting of experts on the draft presidential statement on the question discussed this morning is planned for tomorrow, Wednesday, 19 December. Information concerning the time and the meeting room will be faxed to delegations. Secondly, a meeting on the Arria formula concerning Afghan women is planned for 9.45 tomorrow morning. The Ambassador of Jamaica will preside. Thirdly, consultations on the report of the Secretary-General concerning Guinea-Bissau, initially scheduled for Wednesday, have been deferred because of information given to the Council only this morning. A revised programme of work will be provided tomorrow by the Secretariat.

The meeting rose at 2.40 p.m.